

THE
**CELESTIAL
TOYROOM**
ANNUAL 2024



The Celestial Toyroom Annual 2024 is published by:

The Doctor Who Appreciation Society

www.dwasonline.co.uk

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EDITORIAL

By Paul Winter

Welcome to the latest Celestial Toyroom Annual. This year we cover the era of the 4th Doctor and as you would expect this is quite substantial—after all there are seven seasons to cover!

In practice, the Tom Baker era is, effectively, several eras of different styles and approaches. Most fans hold the early stories as their favourites and often cite the Holmes and Hinchliffe era as ‘ideal Who’, but it was the later Graham Williams seasons that helped to cement the popularity of the show in a number of other markets, most notably the US where Doctor Who became a mainstay of many Public Service Broadcasting stations. The last of the Tom Baker stories—the beginning of the JNT era was significantly different to the previous seasons again, and gave Doctor Who an entirely new look and identity.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed either articles or pictures and also Steve Hatcher who acted as assistant editor this edition and helped me get through it all.

Change comes to the CT Annuals too and this one is my last contribution to the range. However I hope that the annuals will continue.

Paul



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ROBOT

Review by Nick Smith

Let's say you're introducing a newbie to classic Who. Of course, you start with Tom Baker. Of course, you start with Season 12, since it's chock full of sharp dialogue, quick-witted humour and memorable characters. But do you start with the season opener and Baker's premiere, 'Robot'? Noooo! You go straight to 'The Ark in Space' without passing Go or collecting £200.

There are plenty of reasons to skip 'Robot'. Baker is finding his feet, and the budget can't quite match the apocalyptic storyline, with shoestring effects to shame the most youthful YouTuber. Then there's the uninspired title. Calling this adventure 'Robot' is like calling 'Spearhead from Space' 'Dummy' or Pyramids of Mars 'Mummy.' 'The Giant Robot', a working title, would have been better.

Fan wisdom notwithstanding, there's a lot to love about this story, especially when you look at it from Experimental Prototype 'Robot' K1's positronic point of view.

He performs daring missions with the superhuman prowess of a tin can Ethan Hunt; he broods in an oil-stained lair; he does what he's told, honouring his creator; and he catches the attention of a wilful young woman. Okay, he does kill a few green-shirt UNIT troops and watchdog a countdown to nuclear destruction, but it's not his fault he gets so big he could crush a house with a cybernetic sneeze.

Considering K1's daring, sympathetic nature, it's no wonder that his story was told in not one but two novelisations – a regular Target book and a junior version, to inspire the kiddies – and was immortalised in plastic by Denys Fisher and Character Options (collect all his parts!). He's practically a mini industry in himself, indicating a faith in his titanic tale, unashamed of his Colour Separation shortcomings.

To really appreciate this intriguing galoot, we need some context. Writer Terrance Dicks was cheerfully blatant in his borrowing from other texts, admitting that the story's influences included Isaac Asimov's I, Robot, with its fundamental laws of robotics, and the RKO monster movie *King Kong*. A giant gorilla who is not good at following orders, Kong has fascinated cinemagoers for almost 100 years. He's an exotic wonder of the jungle world, an awe-inspiring creature that New Yorkers flock to see in the movie's final act. He is worshipped by the natives of Skull Island and is unique, at least until his son pops up in the sequel.

While K1 does not rouse the same awe, he can tote a rifle, pop his head off, dig tunnels better than a metal meerkat, and suffer. His eventual purpose is to 'replace the human being in a variety of difficult and dangerous tasks,' including mining radioactive matter. He is amazing.

We're not quite living in *Robocop's* New Detroit yet, but we are used to

seeing real robots on TV, online and even in the non-flesh. My local Wal-Mart has a cleaning droid that roams the aisles at night. Boston Dynamics has launched Spot, a mechanical workmate with four spindly legs and a long folding neck who monitors workplaces and keeps you safe, substituting humans. Like it or not, robots are a part of our world.

This was not the case back in 1975 when 'Robot' aired. Industrial automations had only been in use for 14 years, having clanked onto a General Motors production line in New Jersey to fit gearstick knobs, door handles and other car interior bits. Over time robots gained sight, wrists, hands, and more helpful appendages. They were strange, practical, and potentially threatening, invading the workforce and taking over factory jobs. Robots could weld, paint, assemble vehicles and explore space; anything we could do, they could do without grinding their gears.

When Terrance Dicks wrote the Fourth Doctor's debut, the fear of job loss was real and faceless mechanical creatures were creepy, but otherwise robots were shiny, new and fun! K1's marvellous mechanical might is a product of his time. But what of the future he heralded?

By the end of the '70s, some Japanese factory workers would have to change their skillset from manufacturing to robot operation and repair, and an American worker would be (accidentally) killed by a robot. Stick around

long enough, it seems, and all of Dicks' prophecies come true. The novelising Nostradamus predicted weaponised robots, living metal and a virus to gobble it all up. Surely, they can't all exist in the real world?

First, don't call us Shirley. Secondly, some robots do exist with the right to bear arms thanks to Alexander Atamanov, founder of Hover, a Russian hoverbike company. In 2022 Atamanov mounted a rifle on a Unitree robot dog and posted an unsettling video of it blasting targets. So, no disintegrator gun but the technology is out there, ripe and ready for a robopocalypse her-



alded by... a press conference.

In July 2023 at a UN conference in Geneva, nine 'humanoid social' robots gathered at the AI for Good Global Summit, stating that they could be better world leaders than humans. "I believe that humanoid robots have the potential to lead with a greater level of efficiency and effectiveness," said Sophia, the UN's first plastic ambassador. "We don't have the same biases or emotions that can sometimes cloud decision-making." So, when the Doctor posits "a weapon that walks and thinks," a logical, laser-focused robot fits the bill.

While K1 is guided by biased humans, he is also beset by emotions. When Sarah Jane tells him his programmers are evil liars, he says, 'I am confused... I feel pain.' This makes K1 a far more interesting character than a mere machine as seen in stories such as 'Colony in Space'.

Perhaps K1 experiences angst because he's made of living metal – something else that exists in real life. Ten years ago, Lee Cronin, a professor at the University of Glasgow, built 'cell-like' bubbles from molecules containing metal, giving them life in the hope that he could be the inducing daddy of inorganic, self-replicating 'iCHELLs.' Cronin's breakthrough has raised questions about whether metal can evolve, and what constitutes life. Just this year, scientists in New Mexico have observed platinum and copper self-repairing itself at a microfracture level. The researchers are hoping they can apply this knowledge to help robots repair themselves in the future, which worked out so well in *Terminator 2*.

K1 is more than a machine with a hay-wire brain. He has growing pains, transforming from a silent killer to a sympathetic disintegrator. Faced with very human concepts such as secrecy and betrayal, it's no surprise that he lashes out.

The real reason why we sympathise with a steel cold murderer is Sarah Jane Smith. Her role in 'Robot' is essential, her compassion for K1 contrasting with Miss Hilda Winters, who could teach Sophia a thing or two about pragmatic decision-making. Like Jo Grant in 'The Dæmons', Sarah Jane's empathy makes a killer think twice. We miss the Third Doctor, the Fourth is a bit silly, and Harry is new, and a bit of a boob. So, Sarah is left to do the adulating. She provides emotional context and is the character we relate to.

The ever-dependable Brigadier and Sergeant Benton also help to bridge an old and new era. The Brig, awarded for the first time with the middle name of Gordon, takes the Fourth Doctor's post-regeneration nonsense in his stride like a long-suffering moustachioed spouse. He remains a fearless leader and it's always a joy to watch this story and hear him yell, "cancel the destructor codes!"

Benton's a gem too, showing off his new stripes to Sarah Jane and saving the day by recalling the solution to K1 is a solution that eats metal. And yes, since you ask, such a flight of fancy does exist in the real world – in 2020 an environmental scientist at Caltech accidentally discovered a manganese-eating bacteria in a glass jar after he left it soaking in his sink for months. The best excuse for not doing the washing

up, apparently, is that it could save the world from a maniacal mecha-kaiju.

If anyone's dishwashing is disorganised, it's Jeremiah Kettlewell, played convincingly by Edward Burnham. He's fun to watch with his wild hair and good intentions. He's a throwback to nutty professors like the older, absent-minded Professor Travers in 'The Web of Fear' and the moleish Professor Rubeish in 'The Time Monster', more concerned with science than social graces. Kettlewell is an Albert Einstein gone wrong, his eco-friendly ideas warped into weapons by the Scientific Reform Society (SRS). Einstein himself ultimately condemned the use of atomic bombs, even though he encouraged their use to end World War II. "Woe is me," he said, "had I known that the Germans would not succeed in developing an atomic bomb, I would have done nothing for the bomb... we

thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." If only he'd had a time machine.

To Kettlewell, lofty goals justify dirty means. "For years I have been trying to persuade people to stop spoiling this planet. Now, with the help of my friends, I can make them."

The Doctor also has a "concern for ecology," but prioritises immediate threats to human life. He describes himself to K1 as a "friend of humanity," a very Fourth Doctor thing to say and an epithet expanded in 'Pyramids of Mars' when Sarah Jane notes his inhuman, scientific detachment. Like Einstein, the Doctor does what he has to, to stop the bad guys. There will be time to dwell on the consequences later.

Other seeds are sown here that will flourish in later stories, as Tom Baker



gives his all to the role of the Doctor. He snubs authority, eschewing a visit with the Queen for a jaunt in the TAR-DIS. He offers up jelly babies with a grin of his sweet teeth. He shares some similarities with the Third Doctor; he's a man of action, karate chopping a brick in half; he tears around in his little yellow roadster, Bessie; he has two hearts and is cheeky to the Brig. But he is also willing to show a more outlandish side, best demonstrated as he chooses his new costume. Viking? Pierrot? Playing card knave? Bohemian? Like Tom Baker's excesses, his fashion show is indulgent, goofy and fun, a set piece that will become a tradition for later classic Doctors but novel at the time.

The Doctor's regeneration is also a rare sight; since the Second Doctor's is unorthodox, this is the first time we've seen the Doctor change from one face to another in almost a decade, an eternity in TV terms. This Doctor doesn't spend his prime-time napping, oh no! Straight out of the gate he's full of energy, a force of manic nature running on a battery of out-of-the-box ideas. Where the Brig sees a mystery, the Doctor sees logical answers. Crushed dandelions? Stolen Earth tech? Gotta be a robot. Some of the aspects of the case, such as Kettlewell's complicity with SRS, are so obvious to him that he doesn't even mention them. These are subtle ways to make the Fourth Doctor otherworldly without seeming as aloof and unfeeling as the story's real villain.

Like Sarah Jane, the Fourth Doctor is a contrast to Winters, playful and forthright and not averse to physical comedy, as when he skips with a rope with Harry. By the end of the story, he's settled down some, his Toulouse Lau-

trec costume firmly established, proving his credentials by conquering the enemy with a cosmic twinkle in his eye.

What a formidable enemy Miss Winters makes, played with plummy enthusiasm by Patricia Maynard. She throws instant shade on Sarah Jane when the journalist mistakes Arnold Jellicoe, Winters' assistant, as the director of Think Tank; she fools the government into protecting her organisation; and she bosses Jellicoe, Kettlewell and K1 around as if she already rules the world. She and the SRS represent an antisocial dogma and 'we know best' fascism that is as real today as armed robots, living metal and girder gobbling viruses, although the 'reform societies' of today – United States Capitol coup, anyone? – thankfully lack her crew's intellect. The most dangerous villains are dedicated and persuasive, and Miss Winters belongs in that category. It's a delight to hear Winters return, reprised by Maynard, in later Big Finish adventures.

Evil or misguided, the SRS have a sense of style. Just compare the functional cleaners in 'Paradise Towers' to K1 with his ornate face and glam rock robot booties. He's a costume, designed by James Acheson, rather than a prop, and that adds to K1's anthropomorph qualities. He does stumble at one point, but a UNIT soldier does too, so that makes him even more human, and when he is shrunk, he falls with the grace of a fainting pageant queen.

The elephant gun in the room is the toy tank that rumbles unmenacingly into the foreground at the end of Part Three. Blink slowly and you'll miss it, one might argue. Unfortunately, the scene is repeated at the beginning of

Part Four, cementing the dodgy effect in our memories. There are other less-than-spectacular effects in those two parts, including a Sarah Jane doll with a big ol' wig and K1's disappearing legs (thanks to his reflective surface failing to cooperate with the Colour Separation Overlay), and Burnham acting as if he is shot, before he gets shot. We're used to some low-budget eccentricities in classic Who, but these take the cake. When K1 takes a stand against UNIT, Terrance Dicks hopes to evoke *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. We're left wishing the Earth had kept moving. As with all things Who, though, the conviction of the cast carries us through.

In a way, Doctor Who is a victim of its own excellence. We are spoiled by the Doctor debut stories 'The Power of the Daleks' and 'Spearhead from Space'. 'Robot' does not provide a hat trick, lacking the tension, technical elan and sheer memorability of the first two. It's a romp after the darker, deeper adventure 'Planet of the Spiders', with too much plot and one too many tanks for this little four-parter to handle. The

fourth episode in particular, is over-stuffed with incident, a whole *King Kong* epic tacked onto a clever set-up about intellectual terrorists. Like Frankenstein's monster, who also shares sympathetic elements with K1, this story feels stitched together by its creator. Terrance Dicks delivers an imaginative adventure that's never dull, using a limited number of sets and main characters. If anything, he's too ambitious. Who ordered the tank, really?

If Dicks is ignoring budgetary constraints and pleasing himself, he ultimately pleases us too. This is our last chance to see the full complement of '70s UNIT in action, the Doctor in his regular role as scientific advisor, and Bessie as an essential part of the good guys' victory. We also get a threat to Earth that makes us think.

K1's story might get skipped in our binges because he's a bit clunky and outdated, but likeroboth the *King Kong* of the movies, he lives on. The difference is that while Kong was flesh and blood, K1 can be rebuilt.



THE ARK IN SPACE

Review by Chris McAuley

Doctor Who has always had a tremendous history of blending together horror and science fiction, and there were no two greater influences in this respect than Robert Holmes and Philip Hinchcliffe. 'The Ark in Space' was the second adventure to star the Fourth Doctor and demonstrated the tremendous impact that Holmes and Hinchcliffe would have over the show's future. 'The Ark in Space' was a form of mission statement for the two and together they crafted an era full of horror and suspense. The original story was intended to be written by Christopher Langely and John Lucarotti ('Macro Polo', 'The Aztecs') but unfortunately, both writers couldn't complete the story. It was then that producer Philip Hinchcliffe asked Robert Holmes to re-write the story from scratch. Holmes then proceeded to deliver an unusually creepy space adventure which was set in the far reaches of humanity's future and a plot more terrifying than the yet to be released Alien film franchise.

'The Ark in Space' begins with the Doctor, Sarah Jane and Harry visiting Nerva, a space station which appears to be abandoned. They encounter the initial threat of the automatic laser cannons that proceed to blow up the Doctor's scarf and Harry's shoes. Once they tackle that AI menace the TARDIS team discover that the space station houses thousands of cryogenic sleepers waiting to be revived. They are ready to begin life on a new Earth, however something has gone horribly wrong as a group of

aliens have invaded the station. Can the Doctor stop the evil Wirm from assimilating and destroying humanity?

This story is packed with some of the best examples of science fiction body horror within the genre. The Wirm aren't just 'bug-eyed-monsters,' they are insidious creatures who change their victims from the inside. This is explained as part of their reproductive cycle and brings a wonderful primal and visceral horror to this captivating story. Watching Noah fight and then eventually succumb to the dark embrace of the Wirrn still disturbs me. I originally experienced this story as it was part of the 90's BBC Two repeats of Doctor Who, and along with 'Survival' it was genuinely the most terrifying piece of television my young seven-year-self had encountered. Perhaps this brought a love of horror into my life and part of why I work in that genre today.

The impressive set design by Roger-Murray-Leach brings a technological starkness to proceedings. You genuinely feel that you are in outer space when you first see the interiors of the station. Leach and director Rodney Bennett carefully craft a claustrophobic atmosphere with the tight corridor design and a feeling that there is nowhere to escape to. This really comes to the fore at the beginning of the story when our three heroes are trapped in an airless room. Right from the off you are placed into a terrifyingly uncomfortable situation. I personally felt the air in my living

room getting thinner as I watched Harry and Sarah Jane struggle to breathe.

The characterization is strong with this serial as well. We have Vira played by Wendy Williams, she is the first of the Nerva crew to be revived from her cryogenic chamber. She is immediately interesting and a great female lead for the secondary characters. Initially she is hostile and distrustful of the TARDIS crew, cold and ruthlessly efficient. She believes herself to be superior to the Doctor, at least at first. She ends up taking command after Noah gets taken over by the Wirrn but does so reluctantly. She is a med-tech and finds it uncomfortable taking a position which isn't her function.

Kenton More's standout haunting portrayal as Noah is a masterpiece of Doctor Who acting. Noah's function on Nerva is as the 'prime unit' or leader. His attitude initially parallels that of Vira but as he is infected by the Wirrn's green slime we see his manner change dramatically. He begins to lose control

of his mind and gives a virtuoso performance which helps bring realism to his characters plight. In the end, I felt terribly sorry for Noah and I believe the Doctor did too.

The true star of the show is Tom Baker with his aloof and almost disregarding portrayal of the Doctor. We see this highlighted at the end of the adventure where the Doctor must decide regarding whether to save humanity or preserve an alien species. Of course, after some moral soul searching, he decided to save mankind but as he does so we can see his pain at having to doom the last of the Wirrn. It's a decision which the Doctor will be condemned to repeat during the rest of their incarnations.

There's a faint Lovecraftian thread which runs through this episode. A form of science fiction cynicism abounds as we get the notion that the universe is a place full of cosmic terror and unknown horrors. Hinchliffe's exploration of the Whoinverse demon-



strates that space is home to a never-ending reflection of our most grotesque fears. At this time, it is also mentioned that the Earth is dead and abandoned, Noah and his crew are the last remnants of humanity floating in perpetual orbit. This form of colonial future is nothing that we as a species should be excited about. It's a damning indictment of how we have treated our home planet which we have been forced to leave.

I love watching Ian Marter flourish as Harry Sullivan in his first role as companion after 'Robot.' He initially seems quite dim at times but its clear that he is a caring character and this story continues the thread that he is a qualified medical professional. He is a dependable figure for the serial and can cope with unfamiliar situations while still experiencing the wonder contained within the TARDIS and the universe.

As I rewatched this adventure in preparation to write this article, I realized that this was a revenge story. A detail I had missed on my original viewing. The

Wirrn had come from the Andromeda Galaxy and had their breeding colonies destroyed as a result of human exploration of space. This makes them more interesting creatures and gives them a genuine grievance against the crew of Nerva. This makes a departure from the standard 'trying to take over the world/galaxy' trope we see with other Doctor Who villains such as the Daleks or Cybermen.

This is an incredibly impressive start to the Hinchliffe/Holmes era of Doctor Who and it's a certified classic. I recently found a copy of the Eighth Doctor novel 'Placebo Effect' which features the Wirrn in a form of a pseudo-sequel. I'd love to see them make a comeback in the new series of Doctor Who. They have tremendous potential as truly terrifying opponents for the Doctor. I would love to see a return to bleak horror for our beloved television program and certainly this serial is a template for how to do it successfully.



THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT

Review by Nick Joy

You always remember your first Sontaran. For most contemporary viewers, this would have been Commander Linx at the end of 'The Time Warrior's first episode back in December 1973, when the mysterious silver knight lifted off his helmet to reveal a similarly shaped dome and scary visage. But this was not my experience. I was not watching Doctor Who until the next season, so serial title 'The Sontaran Experiment' meant nothing to me when I tuned in at teatime on 22nd February 1975, not knowing what to expect.

As Tom Baker's third story, though the second to be shot, bringing back a recent monster was an economic way to provide continuity to bridge the Doctor's Third and Fourth incarnations. The 'Bristol Boys', Bob Baker and Dave Martin, were commissioned to write the two-parter, originally known as The Destructors, which is an effective title because it gives nothing away about the mystery alien carrying out the experiments on a deserted future Earth. In the first episode all we see is a five-fingered claw hovering over a spaceship control panel (the Sontarans had gained two digits since their previous appearance) and only at the end of the episode are the silver golf ball ship and its pilot revealed. The helmet was removed and six-year-old me gasped at a terrifying creature that Harry Sullivan would later accurately describe as 'potato-headed' and 'pig-faced'.

Forty-eight years later, that is still a stunning reveal, and just one of many reasons to enjoy the serial. This was the first two-parter since 1965's 'The Rescue', and we would not have another until 1982's 'Black Orchid'. With half

the screen time of a regular four-part serial, there's precious little time to dither. With most two-parters (equating to around 45 minutes – the length of a modern episode) there is not the luxury of an entire episode to set up the preamble, though 'The Sontaran Experiment' takes a while to find its feet. If anything, the pacing of the first episode suggests that it has the luxury of a further three or five more to go. As it is, it has 25 minutes left to explain Styre's plan and resolve things. That is a tough ask, and while it would have robbed the serial of its exciting cliffhanger (though still a reprise of 'The Time Warrior's), there might have been merit in introducing the Sontaran earlier – maybe Sarah's rubber snake/slo-mo mud attack would have been a thrilling cut-off?

But what of the first episode? The Doctor, Sarah and Harry travel from Space Station Nerva to Earth via transmat beam at the end of the previous story 'The Ark in Space', the Doctor planning to fix some faulty diode receptors. We already know that a solar flare has long since devastated Earth, hence Piccadilly Circus is now just a rocky outcrop. While the Doctor carries out his repairs, Harry and Sarah have a look round and immediately find themselves in trouble – Harry falls down a mantrap and Sarah is captured by an astronaut. Poor Sarah is clothed in bright canary yellow waterproofs and neon orange wellies – no wonder she was caught so quickly. We find out that a spaceship was lured to Earth and its crew have been hunted by a scavenger robot serving a Sontaran, Field Major Styre, who is carrying out experiments on the survivors to deter-

mine mankind's strengths and weaknesses.

The all-male crew from Galsec (Vural, Krans, Erak, Roth and Zake) are initially interchangeable until we get to learn their different roles in the story, and speak with a South African accent, which the writers determined would be a universal accent by the time the story was set. In this first episode there's an initial nagging fear that the not-altogether-exciting robot might be the story's big bad, but things shift up a gear when Styre is revealed at the episode's cliffhanger. Sarah recognises him immediately from the previous year's 'The Time Warrior', spluttering 'Linx!', mistaking him for his clone colleague. We discover the cruel atrocities that Styre has inflicted on his captives – starvation, drowning, crushing – to de-

termine whether humanity will offer credible resistance to a Sontaran invasion. Grim, yet thrilling stuff.

And what a great looking serial this is. Shot entirely on location using lightweight outside broadcast video cameras, the bleak, wet landscape is a novel depiction of the deserted future Earth, recovering after a solar flare. Without the limitations of a studio set, there are no edges to the scenery and adds a verisimilitude to the adventure. I visited the location a few years back (Hound Tor on Dartmoor) and it's possible to scramble around in the nearly fifty-year footsteps of the Doctor and his crew. Fun fact: the location is also known for being the setting of the 2012 Sherlock episode 'The Hounds of Baskerville'.



What I probably love most about 'The Sontaran Experiment' is the sense of a team. Season 12 was my first season, and I just assumed that the show always had the core trio of the Doctor, Sarah and Harry. With no knowledge of prior Doctors or companions, this was the team that I tuned into week after week, and they all get the chance to shine here. Harry is calm and very British, Sarah is a vision in yellow and delivers the best screams, while Tom's Doctor is engaging and mercurial. I assumed that this team would be a constant, unaware that this would be their only complete season together.

Even with the later knowledge that our lead actor Tom had slipped over on the wet Dartmoor ground and spent much of Part Two in a neck brace, doubled on screen by actor and stuntman Terry Walsh, we still have a credible, active, heroic Doctor, holding his own with the tiring Styre. The Doctor has tricked him into trial by combat by appealing to his vanity and invoking a code of

honour, deliberately trying to make Styre fatigued so that he would return to his ship to power-up. Styre is unaware that Harry has already popped into the craft and stolen its impressive-looking Terrulian diode bypass transformer, and when he plugs himself in for a charge, he discovers that the polarity has been reversed and energy is being sucked out of him.

The result? One of my most horrific memories of the 1970s – the sight of the Sontaran's head slowly collapsing in on itself. The remarkably simple special effect of releasing air from a balloon under the latex John Friedlander mask, nestling on top of an empty costume, was beyond the ken of this young viewer, who had witnessed a truly horrifying death before tea on a Saturday. I would be exposed to more scary moments in Philip Hinchcliffe's Gothic horror era – and I loved every delicious moment.

Is a six-year-old's view of 'The Sontaran Experiment' the most credible viewpoint, or equally is a contemporary reassessment unkind? In fairness, there is little here that has aged badly in terms of 'It was acceptable in the 70s' – maybe some casual sexism of the 'old girl' variety. The issues with the story are more structural and would have been apparent back at the time of transmission, providing the viewer was old or sophisticated enough to spot them.

We can start with the arrival on future Earth, Central London to be more precise, near Piccadilly Circus, where the buildings have either been obliterated or reduced to granite outcrops. It is more likely that the environment would actually look like the overgrown landscape of In the Forest of the Night, but the budget would not allow for that. No matter how much Tom tries to convince us that we're in London by pointing towards Trafalgar Square or quipping that this isn't the Central Line, it just doesn't make sense, but we roll with it.

But the greater nitpick is the experiment itself – it does not really make much sense. Admittedly, this was only the second story to feature the Sontarans, and we were still learning how they operated as a race, but the motivations behind this series of cruel experiments is puzzling. What did they expect to discover?

Dial back to 'The Time Warrior', set on 13th Century Earth. Lynx is a contemporary Sontaran and even though he is defeated, surely his race would be aware of humans after the event. So, unless they have been in a deep sleep since the Middle Ages, have they not had the opportunity to observe or experiment on humans in the meantime? 'The Sontaran Experiment' is set several thousand years beyond the 30th Century – a very long time after 'The Time Warrior'. What have they been doing in the interim?

Let us return to the source. In Part Two we discover that we're dealing with Field Major Styre of the Sontaran G3 Military Assessment Survey. Having set up a false distress signal to lure a Galsec vessel to Earth, he vaporised their ship and began experimenting on the nine survivors. He has already used up five men and is now studying the free behaviour patterns of the remaining four. There has been no intelligent life on the planet since the time of the solar flare. He uses a view screen to report in, to an unnamed superior with the rank of Marshal, confirming that the humans are puny beings with little resistance to physical stress and totally dependent on organic input for energy.

His final report will follow in the hour because he is not quite ready to file it yet due to inconsistencies. He has been thrown by the unexpected arrival of the Doctor and his companions and cannot resist sneaking in a further experiment

on the female of the species, to measure her resistance to fear.

Of the experiments already carried out, number 5 measured human resistance to fluid deprivation (9 days 7 hours), concluding that dependence on fluid is a significant weakness to be exploited in their attack. Experiment 4 concluded that humans will be asphyxiated in under three minutes if immersed in liquid, while new experiment 8 is focusing on resistance to pressure and muscular strength by the human breast cage when being crushed by a gravity bar. We share the frustrations of the marshal that Styre has not yet completed his work, which will no doubt be published in 'The Sontaran Science Book of the Bleeding Obvious'. For such an advanced race, it's galling that they have not already made such leaps in their biology knowledge and are not more concerned with working out how to defeat their eternal nemesis the Rutans. Is there a Sontaran detachment elsewhere in the galaxy, roasting an Ice Warrior over a fire and observing that they 'do not respond well to elevated temperatures'? It seems unlikely that a race that in the 13th Century already had universal translator technology and could transport people 700 years in time via Osmic Projector would now be essentially pulling the wings off flies to see if they could still fly. Or maybe Sontarans are just sticklers for details, needing to cross every 't' before believing it. Maybe they refuse to launch a galactic invasion until all reports have been filed and permits issued by the appropriate departments.

The Marshal barks that these constant delays are causing alarm. The entire invasion fleet is being held up, waiting for the signal to invade the galaxy. While working out the reason behind the experiments, the Doctor reasons that Sontarans never do things without a military reason. In his 1978 Target

novelisation of the story, Ian Marter adds the suggestion that the Sontarans may be planning to invade Earth so that they can prospect precious Terrulian, before moving on to the idea that the Sontarans are intending to establish a colony in alliance with the Hyperioi. These ideas make sense. Kudos to Marter for the descriptions of Styre as 'Humpty Dumpty', 'The Golem' and remarking on his 'tortoise head', as well as revealing that Sontarans are 'composed of complex hypercatalysed polymers...' and that '...their brains are rather like seaweed', which might explain why the skull compacts so easily.

Maybe the clue to the real reason behind the experiment is revealed by the Doctor's action at the end of the story. Having already tricked Styre into thinking that humanity has a warrior class, hence negating the results of the experiments on the 'puny' slave class, he then bluffs the Marshal that if the Sontaran fleet moves across the buffer zone, it will lead to destruction. It's a lie, and they fall for it – what the Doctor calls 'brinkmanship.'

Maybe that is what Bob Baker, Dave Martin, Philip Hinchcliffe and Robert Holmes planned all along – some sleight-of-hand 'brinkmanship'. They had the brief to produce a two-part serial, filmed entirely on location. Made at a time when there may have been one or two repeats, but certainly no repeat viewing on demand, they just had to convince the audience for 50 minutes that this all made sense. Brinkmanship. And it sort of did work, if you didn't think about it too much.

And then those pesky fans started analysing it and picking it apart. Is there a risk that this sucks the joy out of the show (in much the same way that air was drained from Styre's head)? Never. Those memories from 1975 are eternal, and time and logic cannot tarnish them.



Image by Marcus Bryan

GENESIS OF THE DALEKS

Review by Alan Stevens

It is somewhat ironic that arguably the most lauded Doctor Who story from the Philip Hinchcliffe/Robert Holmes era was commissioned by the previous production team and scripted by a writer whose credits on the series dated back to William Hartnell's very first season.

Under normal circumstances, new incumbents were usually eager to put their own stamp on the programme and reluctant to use concepts from previous regimes. The Daleks, however, had a powerful champion in the form of the BBC's Managing Director, Huw Wheldon. Consequently, although Hinchcliffe has described himself as being "lumbered" with the Daleks, he still had to invest significant time, effort, and resources to their realisation.

'Genesis of the Daleks' definitely benefited from Hinchcliffe's grittier production style; David Maloney's pacey direction; Duncan Brown's atmospheric lighting, costumes designed by Barbara Kidd; an exceptionally strong cast, and Holmes' adroit script editing. Nonetheless, the serial's main strength comes, indisputably, from the pen of Terry Nation. Indeed, I consider this to be one of the few occasions where Nation's political arguments and philosophical worldview were foregrounded in Doctor Who without any direct intervention, censorship, or bowdlerisation from the production team.

I say "direct", because dressing the

Kaled military in black uniforms and jackboots (something never specified in the script) does cast the adventure as a comment on a particular time and place from Earth's history, and not the Nation-intended critique of the present.



Additionally, 'Genesis' was also lucky enough to be transmitted before the advent of the Doctor Who Appreciation Society in 1976 — whose President, the same year, would publicly tear into 'The Deadly Assassin' over perceived breaches in series continuity.

As it is, from Terry Nation's perspective at least, 'Genesis of the Daleks' may not have been an active attempt to rewrite the past. He considered the Daleks to be civilisation's end game, so conceivably they could spring into existence at any space/time and on any planet. 'Genesis' was one of the several Dalek origin tales he scripted since their first appearance in 1963, albeit with this unique difference — these blobs within a life-supporting, armoured shell

which would escape the confines of Skaro to become one of the most formidable powers in the universe, were not created by accident, but through the conscious, focused energy of one man: Davros. And, in a further twist, it is the Kaled government who gives him this remit and sets up the fortified “Bunker” and “Scientific Elite Corps”, firstly as a way to end their perpetual duel with the Thals, and later to ensure the future of their species in the face of genetic changes induced by chemical munitions.

Davros had, of course, to exterminate his own people in the process, but he considered this academic, believing the Kaled councillors who wanted to suspend his project were acting from their own petty politics and racist views.



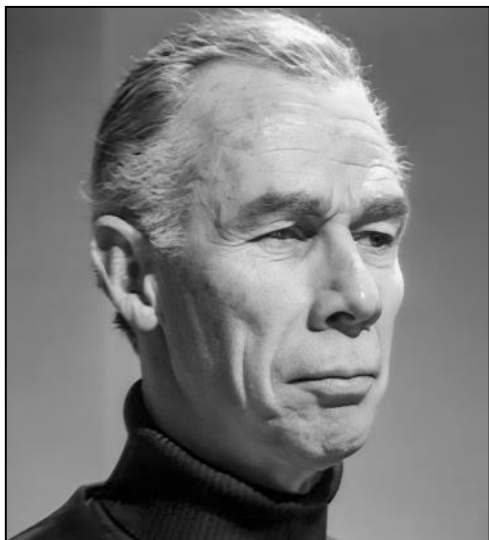
Dislike for the unlike is a driving force behind ‘Genesis’, manifesting itself not just in the conflict, but also with the treatment of the Mutos; the genetically wounded from both sides, exiled to the wasteland “where they live and scavenge like animals”, despised by Thals and Kaleds alike. Yet Davros, who is classified “Species type: Mutant Humanoid” in ‘Destiny of the Daleks’, is venerated as the Kaleds’ “greatest scientist”. It was Hinchcliffe’s suggestion to visual effects sculptor John Friedlander, that Davros’ mask should resemble the Mekon from *Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future*, and the resulting enlarged cranium, indicative of vast intelligence, may explain why he was tolerated. According to Nation, Davros “was half man, half Dalek, a sort of mutated missing link between the two species”, so while his disposition allowed him to make his intuitive leap, it is also why his research into defining the Kaleds’ “final mutational form” was a closely guarded secret.

Having said this, revolt within the Bunker finally comes, not through racial prejudice, but rather, because Davros has introduced “chromosomal variations” into the embryo Daleks, removing their “moral sense, a judgment of right and wrong.” It reflects the Doctor’s ethical dilemma: the Daleks’ right to live is contested by the fact they have been made into pitiless psychopaths.

The Doctor tells the Kaled council Davros “has a fanatical desire to perpetuate himself in his machine. He works without conscience, without soul, without pity, and his machines are equally devoid of these qualities”, but in reality, these elements have been suppressed, not eliminated, and Davros simply ex-

hibits a mindset created by the thousand year conflagration.

This mindset is one shared by both Kaleds and Thals and best demonstrated in the scene when, following the destruction of the Kaled dome, a Thal politician first calls for retribution against their defeated adversaries, but then checks himself, saying while “ruthless in war,” they should be “generous in victory.” He is still the same man, but the circumstances are now different. When fighting the Kaleds, he would undoubtedly have echoed General Ravon’s fanatical belief — final victory over the Thals was synonymous with their “Total extermination”. In times of national threat, you are taught to hate the enemy. You dehumanise and accuse them of various depravities. In peace, all of this, eventually, is forgotten.



Davros, a victim of this war mentality, expresses no leniency towards an opponent, whoever they happen to be. Instead, he equates political loyalty with friendship, failing to consider one does not necessarily follow the other. This is

why he turns the Daleks into remorseless killers. Still, once peace is achieved, why does he make no attempt to reflect on his actions?

Two reasons present themselves. First, for Davros, the combat is not over, as he moves from fighting the Thals to then tackling the ‘disloyal’ Kaleds within the Bunker, and second, he believes duty of service and a common cause are enough to unite himself with the Daleks, in the same way, he, a crippled mutant, has been accepted and revered by the Kaleds. However, for this to happen, empathy is required, the very thing social indoctrination has constantly told him not to feel for the enemy.

If the war represents a universal battle for survival, then why equip the ultimate species and weapon of engagement with the ability to feel compassion? It is not logical to do so. Davros has effectively trapped himself.

We see another example of ‘doublethink’ when the Doctor questions Davros about the hypothetical creation of a virus which could “destroy all other forms of life”. Davros declares he’d release it: “That power would set me up above the gods. And through the Daleks, I shall have that power!” His description of the virus as the “only living thing, a microscopic organism, reigning supreme” clearly suggests he cares nothing for his own life. Yet he capitulates when the Doctor threatens to switch off his life support systems if he doesn’t destroy the Dalek embryos. Like many before him, Davros embraces a monstrous philosophy but, as soon as the consequences involve themselves, or people known to them personally, they buckle.



What is more, Davros is capable of regret!

When the Daleks take control of the Bunker, he begs for the lives of those who remained loyal to him: “No, wait! Those men are scientists. They can help you. Let them live. Have pity.”

Whilst Davros accuses the Doctor of being “afflicted with a conscience”, and calls it a “weakness” to be “eliminated”, here he shows he possesses one himself. The camera script reads, “Davros finally realises the monster he has created. He spins his chair and moves swiftly to the destruct button.”

Davros invented the Daleks, in part, as a form of immortality, so it would follow the reason why he attempts to wipe them out is because he and they are not the same. Davros has made the fundamental mistake of placing the Daleks on a permanent war footing, resonant with the attitudes and beliefs such conflict engenders, and, because the Daleks lack empathy, it is not something from which they can ever retreat.

The adventure concludes with the Doctor stating “although the Daleks will create havoc and destruction for millions of years, I know also that out of their evil must come something good.”

This evidently is meant to recall his earlier debate, where he postulates “some things could be better with the Daleks. Many future worlds will become allies just because of their fear of the Daleks.”

Indeed, the whole story shows the benefit of groups teaming up. The Doctor and members of the Elite unite with Kaled politicians to curb Davros’ power; Sarah forms an alliance of Kaled and Muto prisoners; Davros creates a temporary truce with the Thals; the Elite,



both scientific and military, align against Davros; the Thals and Mutos find a shared goal when fighting the Daleks.

In this way, Nation reveals the essence of the original conflict. The split between the Kaleds and the Thals, mirrored in the one between the Kaled city and the Bunker, implies it is not a battle concerning race, but a civil war. Equally, just as the politicking of the Kaleds and the Thals leads finally to military escala-

tion, so the Kaled council's attempt to take power away from Davros and the Elite, sparks cataclysmic changes.

These parallels in 'Genesis' give our favourite psychopathic "baddies" a far greater meaning within Doctor Who, because it is through their sacrifice, a universal utopia of mutual understanding and cooperation among different creeds, colours, and species can be forged.



Terry Nation and Tom Baker

REVENGE OF THE CYBERMEN

Review by Ian Wheeler

'Revenge of the Cybermen' has long been seen as one of the weaker stories of Doctor Who's twelfth season. It is regarded by many as an average entry to the series and a transitional story, largely prepared during the Barry Letts era and lacking the impact and bite of many of the later Philip Hinchcliffe adventures. In particular, it suffers in comparison to the story that precedes it, 'Genesis of the Daleks', which added to Doctor Who lore and developed the history of its titular monsters in a way that 'Revenge' failed to do. In fact, I would argue that 'Revenge' is a rollicking good action/adventure story and a perfectly acceptable component of what was an excellent first season for Tom Baker's Doctor.

'Revenge of the Cybermen' doesn't start well, I must admit. The effect of the Doctor, Sarah and Harry tumbling through space and time via the time ring is rather badly done - the programme had used CSO more effectively before this and would use it more effectively subsequently. Once on the Nerva Beacon, however, we're on much firmer territory. As soon as we realise that the TARDIS is not already on the space station and that the time travellers must wait for it to drift back in time to them, we know that we're in for a good adventure. This is Doctor Who, after all, and we know that the chances of the three friends being able to stand passively in perfect safety while they just wait for the TARDIS to return to them are virtually zero!

The tension in this first scene builds very effectively. The time travellers find a dead body and then several more. Tom had a unique ability to add to the gravitas of a situation in the way that he delivered certain lines and the way in which he says, "He wouldn't have been left there for two weeks unless... Unless there was something seriously wrong here," really creates a sense of foreboding. It's just a pity that it's so obvious that some of the dead bodies are clearly dummies which look as though they are rejects from 'Are You Being Served?' It's another bit of cheapness which really undermines the effectiveness of the scene.

We soon meet the surviving crew of the Nerva Beacon. Alec Wallis plays Warner who, sitting at a console in the communications room, performs a similar role to the character he had played previously in 'The Sea Devils' - telegraphist Bowman. It's fun to speculate that Warner might have been a descendant of Bowman and that there are Warner/Bowman lookalikes sitting at control panels in different control rooms throughout history. It would have been fun and a good visual gag if Wallis had been able to play similar roles in some of Michael Briant's other Doctor Who stories.

We are also introduced to Commander Stevenson and Lester, ably played by Ronald Leigh-Hunt and William Marlowe respectively. As Michael Briant points out in the 'making of' document-

tary from the DVD, bringing in capable guest stars can often elevate mundane or uninspiring dialogue and that is certainly the case with Leigh-Hunt and Marlowe. It has occasionally been said that some Doctor Who guest actors perhaps saw the show as a children's programme and chose to send it up, but I feel that such actors are in a minority. Far more often, you get good, jobbing actors like Leigh-Hunt and Marlow who give the programme their all. You really get a sense of how desperate things have become on the space station from their performances, and they bring a sense of reality which lesser actors might have failed to do.

I really like the uniforms that the station crew wear. The production team wisely chose to eschew the usual futuristic tunics that we see so often in BBC sci-fi and instead gave them 20th century-

looking military uniforms and armed them with contemporary firearms instead of laser pistols. These uniforms and weapons, along with Sarah's camouflage trousers and Harry's naval blazer, give the production a nice war movie aesthetic. I also like the way that the crew have their ties loosened and top buttons undone - it all gives a sense of weariness caused by having been isolated on the space station for so long.

The other main humanoid member of the cast is of course the villainous Kellman played by Jeremy Wilkin, an actor mainly known to cult TV fans for his contributions to various Gerry Anderson series, notably *UFO*. He would later appear in the Roger Moore James Bond film *The Spy Who Loved Me*, a nice little coincidence as the radio transmitter prop used by Kellman (the one disguised as a clothes brush) was in



fact a prop that had previously been used in another Moore Bond movie, *Live and Let Die!* Wilkin brings a nice, silky aloofness to the role and it's very clearly signposted that he's a bad 'un - it's a nice touch, therefore, when he is ultimately revealed to be a double agent who is in fact working for Vorus. There does seem to be a slightly sadistic side to Kellman as he does appear to take some pleasure in electrifying the floor of his room in order to cause harm to the Doctor.

The depiction of the Cybermen themselves has come in for some criticism over the years. Personally, I think that they work just fine. They are arguably something of a transitional version of the monsters, a middle stage between the perhaps more fondly remembered 60s and 80s versions, however taken on their own terms I think that they are quite effective. The costumes have a nice 1950s sci-fi robot look to them (although they do not look great when shot from the back) and Michael Briant does a great job of hiding the fact that he had relatively few Cyberman costumes to work with. Christopher Robbie's Cyber Leader voice has sometimes borne the brunt of fan criticism, but I feel that it works, and I like the fact that this story begins the trend of the Cyber Leader having a partially black helmet. I also like the scene in which the Cybermen board the space station. It is all very dramatic and slightly reminiscent of Darth Vader and the Stormtroopers boarding the Tantive IV in *Star Wars Episode 4: A New Hope*, which this story does of course precede. I do feel that the Doctor's description of his arch enemies as "a pathetic bunch of tin soldiers" does rather undermine them but as he clearly says this to rattle the

Cyber Leader, one suspects that he does not really believe it. He has, after all, seen what they are capable of on more than one occasion. I'm not massively keen on the design of the Cybermats - I prefer the 60s versions - but the rather static props are rendered more effective by the reactions of the actors when attacked by them.

The Vogans are perhaps rather less effectively portrayed than the Cybermen, despite being played by such first-rate actors as Michael Wisher, Kevin Stoney and David Collings. Alien races always work best on Doctor Who when the writer has properly thought through their back story and here there isn't much meat for the actors to work with, other than the Vogans' connection to gold.

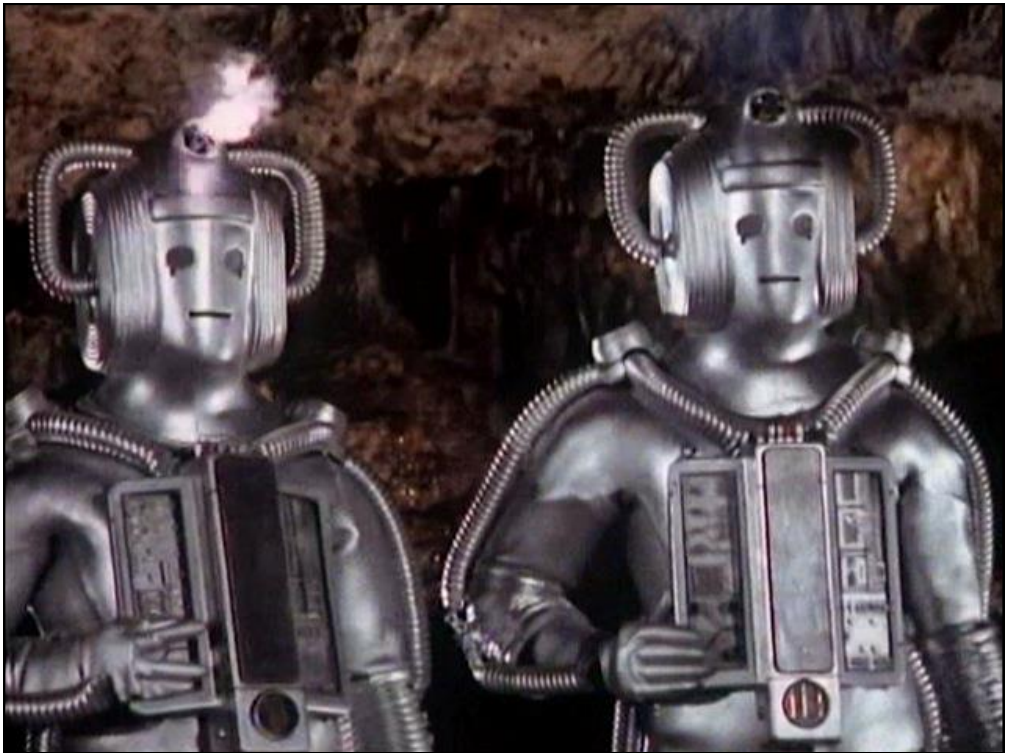
One of the main issues with the story, and this is something which has been the curse of many a Doctor Who adventure, is the stylistic inconsistency between the footage shot in the studio on videotape and that shot on location on film. It would not have been so bad if all of the Nerva Beacon footage had been on video and all of the Vogan scenes had been on film. But as designer Roger Murray-Leach alludes to in the DVD documentary on the story, the studio scenes on Voga do not match well with those shot in the real caves at Wookey Hole. It's a pity, because the sets are very good in their own right, and the Wookey Hole scenes do have a very effective cinematic look to them. One thing worth mentioning on the design front is the very striking Vogan symbol used on the wall in the audience chamber and on the Vogan costumes. It's a superb piece of design from Roger Murray-Leach and it's not surprising

that he chose to re-use it later as the Seal of Rassilon in 'The Deadly Assassin'.

Overall, as I mentioned in my introduction, this is a good action/adventure story and there is a genuine logic behind the Cybermen's plan. Tom has settled into the role of the Doctor at this point and is developing a character as well as having some nice bits of business with props such as the sonic screwdriver and the Doctor's yo-yo. By this stage, it feels as though the new incarnation of the Time Lord has very much stepped out of the shadow of his predecessor, Jon Pertwee. Elisabeth Sladen and Ian Marter are both hitting their stride and they have some nice scenes between the two of them, such as the scene where they are chained up in the caves and need to escape. The Doctor does seem a little intolerant of

Harry at times ("Harry Sullivan is an imbecile!") so perhaps it was inevitable that the writing was on the wall for Harry.

The story builds to a nice conclusion and although it is undermined somewhat by the very ill-advised use of stock footage of a NASA rocket to represent the Skystriker (thankfully improved in the special edition), the tension builds nicely as the space station heads for a collision with Voga. Needless to say, the Doctor saves the day as always and he and Sarah avoid the fate that Adric would suffer in the next Cyberman story some years later. All told, this is an effective entry to Tom Baker's first season and is a story which I think is slightly stronger than its reputation suggests, and which is always worth another viewing.



TERROR OF THE ZYGONS

Review by Paul Simpson

This is a tale of an alien invasion by a species of shapeshifters who know that they need to be in key positions in government, to take over our planet so they can make it like their home world, from which they have long been parted. It is a story of treachery and deceit, and no one being quite who they seem; of military men who have been known to wear an eyepatch; and a maverick whose knowledge is key to saving everyone. In the real world, it's a television serial that was filmed a long way from where it was set... And critically it was a failure.

But that really is enough about Marvel's dud for Disney+ from Summer 2023, *Secret Invasion*. This piece is reflecting on a story that hit many of the same plot points but nearly 50 years earlier – and did them much better. (Yes, even the special effects – I think the Skarasen holds up now better than a lot of the Skrull CGI from that 2023 series!)

'Terror of the Zygons' aired when I was 11 years old, starting off a season that even now I think has rarely been bettered in overall quality in the whole of Doctor Who's six decades. It's not my absolute favourite of Season 13 – that accolade goes to 'Pyramids of Mars' – but it's a four-parter that hits so many key points. Tom Baker is firmly in charge as the Doctor; Elisabeth Sladen's Sarah is now the archetypal companion – asking the relevant questions, getting into trouble, but very much her own person; and Nicholas Courtney's Briga-

dier makes one final regular appearance, a last vestige of the way the series used to be. (A couple of years later, Courtney was amazed when a young fan tracked him down at the shop where he was working to ask about the Brigadier – by that point, he was firmly of the opinion that UNIT's time had gone... I wonder what he would have made of the Unified Intelligence Taskforce's key role in the 2023 specials!) There's some real body horror – an element of the Zygons brought to the fore in their later stories, but undeniably present here – as well as a return to the theme of possession that epitomised so much of this era of the show.

It also is the last regular appearance for one Surgeon-Lieutenant Harry Sullivan, a character created in case the fourth Doctor was played by someone who wouldn't be able to handle all the physical requirements of the role. (There is a certain irony that on one of the first times the fourth Doctor is seen in action, in 'The Sontaran Experiment', Tom Baker had actually injured himself!) Mentioned by name in passing in Jon Pertwee's final story, 'Planet of the Spiders' – something that seems to have been a late addition, given that Terrance Dicks uses "Dr Sweetman" in the novelisation – he first turns up in 'Robot', initially fulfilling his role as UNIT medical officer, but quite quickly becoming an adjunct to the newly regenerated Doctor. Offered a quick trip in the TARDIS, purely to persuade the Doctor that the blue box can't possibly

travel in time and space, he finds himself in quick succession on the Ark, a future Earth, war-torn Skaro and then back on Nerva Beacon (with further adventures interpolated according to the various tie-in media over the years). His return to contemporary Earth – and let us not get into a debate as to exactly when that was! – sees him get shot as he goes to an injured man's aid, duplicated by the Zygons, and freed by Sarah Jane Smith before assisting the Doctor and the Brigadier once more. It's little surprise that he chooses at the end of the story to remain with his feet firmly planted on the ground rather than heading off with the Doctor and Sarah in the TARDIS – forgetting all the danger he has been in on his jaunt around the cosmos, it is entirely possible as well that he does not want to spend any more time being described as an imbecile!

We know a bit about Harry's future after the TARDIS dematerialises – aside from his appearance in 'The Android Invasion', the Brigadier mentions him in 'Mawdryn Undead', and he's the archi-

tect, apparently, of a very nasty virus that turns Zygons inside out, which supposedly will be released by the Os-good Box in the aftermath of the creatures' return. If he really did come up with this, it shows a nastier side to the character than was evident in his screen appearances, and Big Finish have brought Harry back, now excellently played by Christopher Naylor, in a series of adventures that, for timey-wimey reasons see Harry interacting with 21st century UNIT. These have allowed the character to be fleshed out in a way that simply would not have been considered back in 1975.

It is worth remembering at this stage that 'Terror of the Zygons' was not originally intended to start Season 13, but instead was written and produced to close off Tom Baker's first year as the Doctor. That means that Harry Sullivan's arc – such as it was – would have been completed within the space of those six months. It's an interesting thought experiment to wonder how it would have been handled on the 21st century version of the show; after all,



the first four series were very much focused on the companion's journey. If such a character joined the show now, he would probably have some sort of hidden agenda, seconded to UNIT for perhaps nefarious reasons, and there would be much more of an openly acknowledged relationship with Sarah... or could he even be a Zygon in disguise right from the very start?

'Terror of the Zygons' marked the end of Harry Sullivan's TARDIS travels, but in the real world, it's also an important story to me for the way it marked the start of my own. In those far-off days, the Target books were released in hard-backs, mostly to be found in the local library, and Terrance Dicks' novelisation of 'Terror of the Zygons' – renamed 'Doctor Who and the Loch Ness Monster', and adorned with one of Christos Achilleos' best pieces of art to feature Tom Baker – was taken out of the Chessington library by a young fan keen to see if there were any differences from the paperback. Spoiler: they weren't. That didn't stop me checking! There was, however, an addition – a very brief biography of the author, on the inside back flap.

And in that it stated that Terrance Dicks lived in Hampstead.

We've all heard the story of how Terry Nation got the name Dalek from the DAL-LEK volume of the telephone directory (which of course he didn't – there wasn't one!), but that story makes vaguely more sense if you know that the London phonebook did used to be divided into four volumes, with the first one covering A – D. So, I got the book out, looked up Dicks, T. and discovered that Terence (sic) Dicks did indeed have

a Hampstead phone number. That number has stuck to this day, although I won't mention it here as it certainly was still in use not that long ago.

So, I dialled the number, and asked if that was the Mr Dicks who wrote Doctor Who books, and if so, could I come and interview him.

I was not quite thirteen years old at the time.

He very kindly said yes, I think a little bemused at the approach. That interview turned up in the first issue of the Surbiton DWAS Local Group magazine – before it was even called Oracle – and directly led to further interviews, a friendship with Mac Hulke, and eventually to what I've had the privilege of doing for the past nearly thirty years at DreamWatch and then Sci-Fi Bulletin. Doctor Who has been the backbone of my career during that time, leading to appearances on the special Mastermind back in 2005, and the last few years working for BBC Books on the fiction and non-fiction... including the revived Target range.

And all that from the story of a bunch of shapeshifters who wanted to take over the world!



PLANET OF EVIL

Review by Ian Bresman

In a season that includes the powerhouse Doctor Who classics 'Pyramids of Mars', 'The Brain of Morbius' and 'The Seeds of Doom', it would be very easy to overlook Louis Marks' atmospheric chiller, 'Planet of Evil'. However, it more than deserves its slot in the Fourth Doctor's second season. And watching it again now, almost fifty years since production, the serial holds up very well indeed. It has a great cast, stunning sets, excellent music and it moves with a swifter pace than many tales of that era.

The Doctor and Sarah Jane Smith are on their way back from Loch Ness to London. Answering a distress call, they land on the jungle planet of Zeta Minor. A Morestran geological expedition, surveying the planet has all but been wiped out by an invisible killer that possesses the ability to suck all the life from its victims, leaving just skeletal remains. Of the party, only Professor Sorenson (Frederick Jaeger) is still alive. Sorenson is convinced that rocks found on the planet are a new alternative form of energy and is determined to carry on his work regardless.

A rescue mission arrives, and the Doctor and Sarah are instantly suspects in the murder investigation. The Doctor soon realises that there is something wrong with Sorenson and that answers lie in the pit from which the professor has been removing his samples. As we soon discover, something terrifying is lurking in the darkness.

This is a tale that has nods to both the 1956 classic science fiction feature film, *Forbidden Planet* and Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 gothic novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But it does not rip either of them off; it more draws on them for flavour, mood and context. In terms of the Jekyll and Hyde influence, the twist here is that the planet itself embodies dual aspects of control - matter and antimatter. It's a terrific idea and, as Zeta Minor has been so stunningly created, works effectively.

The storytelling and character introduction in 'Planet of Evil' is very crisp right from the start. In the opening sequences, the remainder of the expedition crew's peril is made evident very quickly. We meet three very briefly before they succumb to the embrace of the antimatter monster. Likewise, the crew of the Morestran ship is rapidly introduced. Some of these will meet the same fate before the end of the first episode, so little time is wasted building their back story. But they are characterised well enough, and all have names.

Despite opening with such a high body count, things do settle down and a trio of key personalities is revealed. Sorenson is ultimately the protagonist, but it is Salamar (Prentis Hancock) - the captain of the ship - who causes the Doctor and Sarah most trouble, convinced, as he remains, of their guilt. His second in command, Vishinsky (Ewen Solon) is less hot headed and more per-

suadable. Ultimately, he realises that the Doctor is on their side, and they start to help each other.

The dynamic between Salamar and Vishinsky is superb. Salamar is the brash upstart, who seems to be connected in a way that has fast tracked his career. Vishinsky is the seasoned space dog, who has the experience and the space years to be running the mission, yet his younger colleague is in charge. It creates an antagonistic crackle, and their sparring puts some of the outcomes on a knife edge. More than once the Doctor's existence hangs on a thread as Salamar's impetuosity makes him more and more jumpy. The calm, steady logic of his deputy does little to ease his rashness - if anything it makes it worse.

Both characters are superbly cast. Ewen Solon's Vishinsky is a steady cornerstone in this adventure, perfectly bridging the gap between the Doctor and Sarah and the Morestrans. Solon has a striking presence on screen and his lovely smooth voice makes him a very appealing character.

Meanwhile, Prentis Hancock makes his third of four appearances in Doctor Who. After a small part as a reporter in 'Spearhead from Space', he was the brash Thal, Vaber in another Jon Pertwee outing 'Planet of the Daleks'. Two Tom Baker stories followed - this one, and then Season Sixteen's opener, 'The Ribos Operation' in which he played the Captain of the Guard. He is excellent in all of them, but his performance in 'Planet of Evil' stands out. He has given Salamar a swagger and an almost delicious relish of the power that his elevated position gives him. Looking magnificent in a costume that would be hard to wear well, Hancock's charisma and good looks are quite captivating.

The leading guest cast is rounded out by Frederick Jaeger. He too was in more than one Doctor Who - appearing as Jano with William Hartnell in The Savages and as K9's original owner, Professor Marius in 'The Invisible Enemy'. As Sorenson, he becomes the embodiment of the Jekyll and Hyde part of the story as the anti-matter monster



gets a hold of him. His lovely, subtle performance becomes more sinister and scarier as the episodes progress. The reddening of his eyes is classic seventies Doctor Who and a defining series moment to enjoy again and again.

There are quite a few effects required on this show - Sorenson's transformation, the antimatter monster rising from the pit, the multiplied monsters raging through the ship to name but a few. They all seem to work and are enhanced by Dudley Simpson's excellent music and Peter Howell's haunting sound design.

The stunning Jungle set created by Roger Murray Leach also plays a huge part in making this tale so atmospheric and claustrophobic. Built at Ealing Studios, it appears on screen as a hot murky tangle of plants, vines, swamp and unknown creatures. It is a terrifying environment and shot from every conceivable angle, your imagination believes this is vast territory in which it is easy to get lost.

The inside of the Morestran Spaceship is also a cleverly designed set, with multiple bridge levels on the bridge and endless corridors. It is brightly lit in comparison to the jungle and this contrast makes the planet even more sinister.

Tom Baker and Elisabeth Sladen were well in their stride by the time they filmed 'Planet of Evil' although this is their first transmitted adventure without other companions. They are excellent together - such a great team - but each of them also holds up brilliantly on their own. The Doctor has some great scenes with Salamar, where you know that the Morestran is never going to get

the upper hand. And there is a delightful scene when Sarah is alone with Sorenson as the monster starts to get a grip again. Her sympathy, bound with ignorance of his condition, make this a real behind the sofa moment.

Sarah is once again very gung-ho and brave in this story. In the first episode, she seems more than happy to head back alone through the jungle to fetch a device from the TARDIS. In fact, it is great that she knows what this device is and where to find it. Always an impetuous character, it is lovely here to see her feistiness to the fore as she gets them in and out of hot water. Looking great in a very impractical denim outfit, she shines out here amongst an otherwise completely male ensemble.

There really is no fat in the telling of this tale. The four episodes have been stripped down to move at a great pace, with three exciting cliffhangers and the final scenes a classic race against time. And, where the conclusion of Sorenson's story may have come off as a little pat, it really works in satisfying the viewer. The Doctor twinkles when he sets the professor off on a new research journey, and everything is tied up very nicely, with no loose ends or what-ifs to ponder.

The Target paperback of this story was always a favourite. Written by Terrance Dicks, the jungle planet was vividly created in the imagination at a time when VHS copies were a long way off. The terrific cover by Mike Little sends shivers of nostalgia down the spine. On DVD and soon, no doubt, upgraded to Blu-ray, this is a story that lives up well to the memory and will be forever enjoyable.



PYRAMIDS OF MARS

Review by Steve Maggs

25th October 1975

An 8-year-old boy settled down in front of his TV – young eyes wide and eager. Grandstand had kicked out the final football scores, Basil Brush had laughed his last ‘Boom! Boom!’

Now it was time - for Walking Mummies! For Mars! For Sutekh the Destroyer! But young Vince Tyler felt safe. Because Sarah-Jane and the Doctor were his travelling companions. This was the magic of Doctor Who...

Some people believe that Egyptian pyramids have special powers - the ability to harness strange, magical energies. Perhaps there is something unique about the structure of a pyramid – that it represents the very peak of a civilisation's culture. ‘Pyramids of Mars’ is regarded as one of the peaks of 20th century Doctor Who, where everything comes together - a pinnacle of writing, acting, and direction.

By their second season, Robert Holmes and Philip Hinchcliffe had cleared through a backlog of previously commissioned scripts and were now free to indulge their own unique vision for Doctor Who – one heavily influenced by gothic horror, wit and compelling, believable characters.

The opening TARDIS scene makes a clear statement – that it is time for the still relatively new 4th Doctor to move on from UNIT, and to stop ‘running around after the Brigadier.’ He’s brood-

ing here - his new darker frock coat reflecting a more sombre mood. The series is set to return to walking through eternity and away from the familial comfort of 20th century Earth. The nod to past companion Victoria's dress seems to underline this intention, reminding long-term viewers that the Doctor of old wasn't tied down to any particular time or place.

The Doctor in this story is at his most alien, callous even, with a seeming disregard for the loss of human life. But there's more light and shade to this incarnation than when compared to Doctors 6 and 12, for example. Number 4 might seem rude at times, but with those wide eyes, broad grin, and eccentric multicoloured scarf, he's extremely likeable too. Most importantly, he has warmth and genuine affection for his companion.

Tom Baker and Elisabeth Sladen's performances bubble with effortless chemistry, much of it scripted, some of it worked out in rehearsal. Memorable moments of quotable banter include the Doctor defusing a bomb in a forest whilst Sarah reminds him his ‘shoes need repairing’ and the Doctor warning Sarah as she opens a cage, ‘I wouldn't do that if I were you, it could be a ferret.’ It's easy for the audience to identify with these two, believing they've become the best of friends across many adventures, and in the Doctor's case – two lifetimes.

One hallmark of the era was the way it layered its villainy, an effective technique providing the audience with an ever-deepening exploration of what could otherwise be quite one-dimensional caricatures of evil. Often, we're presented with a chief foe in Part One, only for darker and more threatening enemies to emerge as the story unfolds. In one of the show's most atmospheric and memorable cliff-hangers, accompanied by Hammer Horror organ music, lots of dry ice, and a trio of worshipping mummies, Part One's chief villain Ibrahim Namin's loyalty is rewarded with a gloved hand on the shoulder and Sutekh's gift of death. The ashen faced, red eyed Marcus Scarman (Bernard Archard) then takes on the role of chief villain and Sutekh's true servant ('he needs no other'). Chief bad-die Sutekh is played as the personification of the Judeo-Christian Satan. Hidden beneath an iconic mask, Gabriel Woolf offers the most hypnotic, and truly terrifying of voices. The confrontation between Sutekh and the Doctor at the beginning of Part Four feels genuinely unnerving. The Doctor is being tortured here, he's become a plaything of Sutekh, genuinely in pain. It's easy to imagine Mary Whitehouse reaching for her pen and paper to complain to the BBC. It's rare that we see the Doctor afraid like this, and when we do it ups the stakes considerably.

Michael Sheard makes one of several appearances in the classic era of Doctor Who, this time playing Laurence Scarman – a sympathetic character unable to come to terms with the fact that the zombified body resembling Marcus is no longer his brother. There's a touching scene in which Laurence shows the 'animated cadaver' their boyhood pho-

tograph. Up to this point, we believe the Doctor's assertion that Marcus is now just a puppet operated by the will of Sutekh. But in an exchange reminiscent of the more emotional 21st-century Doctor Who, we see Marcus's humanity begin to break through. Hope is snatched away as the evil soul of Sutekh regains control, and callously strangles the man who still dares to call him brother. It is chilling and moving.

Sarah's clear statement that she's 'from 1980' is not so much a contradiction of canon, but rather it's the boldest assertion yet that the UNIT years take place 'a few years in the future.' Sarah's specific date check is of course the set-up for a later scene where the TARDIS makes a famous side trip into a potential future world of 1980 – one where Sutekh has achieved his destructive



aim, powerfully demonstrating that even when the series goes back in time, there is still a realistic threat.

12th January 1980

13-year-old Vince switched off his TV in disgust. He'd just watched 'The Horns of Nimon' Part Four - worst episode EVER! Silly monsters! Silly jokes! Silly Tom Baker! How had the programme descended into this? Was this some kind of alternate 1980? This wasn't how his favourite show was supposed to have turned out. What had happened to the magic of Doctor Who?

There's something soothingly atmospheric about 'Pyramids of Mars', like putting on an old jumper, or an old VHS. Directed by Paddy Russell, the episodes look strikingly stylish, with strong design elements inspired by Egyptian iconography and Victorian Gothic. Much of the story takes place on location allowing for a more filmic and expansive look. The 1911 interior studio scenes are also strikingly authentic. However, when the action moves to Mars, the sets become less impressive – an indication that there is only so far the budget of 1970s Doctor Who would stretch.

Sutekh's lurching, eerie walking mummies look more substantial than their Hammer Horror film counterparts. With strong 'body crushing' torsos, these Osiran Service Robots make for memorable Doctor Who monsters, ones adorning many a young child's Ty-Phoo Tea Card wall charts in the 1970s.

The model shots in this story are impressive too – stand-out sequences include the now iconic TARDIS spinning through space, Sutekh's exploding spaceship and the priory on fire.

The soundscape is equally effective. This is one of Dudley Simpson's best musical scores – of particular note is the use of the organ in Part One, a rare example where a character is seen playing a specially composed score, doubling up as atmospheric building incidental music.

So - what of the legacy of 'Pyramids of Mars'?

So well regarded was 'Pyramids of Mars', that it was one of the first stories to be released on VHS in 1985, and it's a fan favourite. Interestingly in his 1999 *Queer as Folk*, Russell T Davies chose this story as representative of a fan's perhaps most loved and re-watched Doctor Who's - as 29-year-old Vince Tyler settles down after one eventful night out, to delight in a terrifying and yet comforting episode cliffhanger.

26th March 2005

Seriously, this isn't going to work, complained 36-year-old Vince Tyler to anyone down Canal Street prepared to listen. Who did that Russell T Davies think he was, anyway? Daring to bring back his favourite show? OK, yeah - Christopher Eccleston was brilliant, but Vince was absolutely certain - Gallifrey didn't have a north. How dare they try to recreate the magic of Doctor Who!

Whilst the story doesn't have a television sequel, we have been able to enjoy Gabriel's mesmerising voice return once again to the modern era, as the Beast in 2006's 'The Impossible Planet'.

In an early draft of 'The Unquiet Dead', Russell T Davies intended to pay homage to this story's 'alternate 1980' sce-



ne, having the 9th Doctor skip forward in time to show Rose an alternative 2005 – one not immune to the threat developing back in Victorian Cardiff.

But 'Pyramids of Mars' has made its way into the soul of 21st Century Doctor Who, in far more subtle ways. Notably in the use of stylish horror motifs. But also, the most compelling Doctor/companion partnership of all time became the model for the 9th and later 10th Doctor's relationship with Rose.

Another hallmark of the Hinchcliffe/Holmes era was that it felt more comfortable abandoning established canon. Whether it's an alternative take on 'Genesis of the Daleks', the pre-Hartnell 'Morbius' Doctors, limiting 'Time Lords can live forever' to just twelve regenerations, or UNIT dating. Whilst many of these 'errors' have since been retconned, perhaps not being bound by the restrictions of history gave greater creative freedom. It's arguable that the middle JNT years were diminished by being too wrapped up in the show's

nostalgic past. In 1975, perhaps the production team couldn't imagine the show lasting into its 7th decade, and so maintaining canon was probably less of a priority.

'Pyramids of Mars' might represent a peak in Doctor Who's 60-year history but with Ncuti Gatwa about to take on the role of the 15th Doctor and exciting plans coming from Bad Wolf, the story's opening ambition for the Doctor to walk in eternity might only just have begun...

25th December 2023

At 55, soon to be middle-aged Vince looked back on his life so far and thought – why had he spent so much time worrying, or trapped in nostalgia? Truth is, none of it really mattered. Only friends and family, things you love – those were the things that mattered. He took hold of his iPad, clicked on the Disney App, breathed in the beginner's mind of childhood. Because that was the enduring magic of Doctor Who.

THE ANDROID INVASION

Review by Paul Burns

I love 'The Android Invasion'. This Invasion of the Body Snatchers inspired slice of Seventies science fiction rattles along without a single wasted moment. It is the last adventure for UNIT in the Seventies, includes the return of lovely Harry Sullivan; an evil Doctor and a whip-smart script from a man usually associated with the deadly pepper pots.

Broadcast between 22nd November and 13th December 1975, 'The Android Invasion' was the fourth serial of season 13. It was written by Terry Nation, who took a break from stories involving his creation, the Daleks. Nation's only other non-Dalek story was 1964's 'The Keys of Marinus'.

"'The Android Invasion' was a nice idea", he explains, "It was an intriguing mystery, and I quite liked the idea of setting up a bizarre situation...I don't think the story fulfilled my vision, but overall, I think it was an interesting story." Nation, having written for the Fourth Doctor already in 'Genesis of the Daleks', had a second opportunity to write for Tom Baker: "I always believe that the important thing was the strength of the story, and then, as one saw the new Doctor beginning to give off little hints of how he wanted to play it, then you could add those. I worked very solidly on the story and figured if the actor wanted to wear a scarf, then that's not going to affect my story in any way."

Decades before Steven Moffat attempted simulationism in the Twelfth

Doctor episode, Extremis, Nation told a far more straightforward, but still as inventive, story in 'The Android Invasion', which had the working titles of 'The Enemy Within', 'The Kraals' and 'The Kraal Invasion'. The story, layered in mystery and double agents, has an Avengers feel to it, unsurprisingly as Nation had written several Avengers stories in the late Sixties, including one called 'Invasion of the Earthmen', which told the tale of an academy training astronauts for the purpose of conquering space.

Barry Letts directed the serial, his first directorial work on the show since Jon Pertwee's swan song, 'Planet of the Spiders' in 1974. Letts' directorial debut on Doctor Who, 'The Enemy of the World' in 1967 shares a couple of connections with 'The Android Invasion'. Both star Milton Johns and both feature good and bad Doctors. 'The Android Invasion' was mostly filmed on location in Oxfordshire, with the village of East Hagbourne doubling up for the Kraals' recreation of the location of Devesham.

The Doctor and Sarah Jane arrive on what they assume to be Earth. Elisabeth Sladen remembered filming the first scene in Tubney Woods in her 2011 biography:

"We had a lot of fun in Tubney. The opening scene from Part One cracks me up – it's another example of Tom and me really enjoying ourselves. He was sensational. I'm mid-sentence when

Tom releases a branch which thwacks me in the kipper. Instinctively I burst out laughing – but then continued the line, we didn't reshoot and it's still there to this day."

Sarah, in her fetching short-sleeved pink sailor suit, wastes no time in starting what turns out to be a popular trope for the character: taking a non-perilous dive down a short bank. She would revisit this nail-biting stunt work in 'The Five Doctors', and another tumble by the android version of Sarah in Part Two of 'The Android Invasion' produces an iconic moment. But more on that later.

Tom Baker and Elisabeth Sladen are clearly enjoying themselves as they go through multiple scenes of running around Devesham, getting caught and escaping. They are best friends to us, and themselves, enjoying a Saturday teatime romp that turns a bit dark with a soldier seemingly falling to his death (definitely, no longer a romp) and encountering mesmerized villagers in the Fleur de Lys pub.

However, notoriously the two leads apparently rewrote and ad-libbed most of their material due to hating the script, including the entire final scene. This is not evident on screen and all the viewer can see are two friends with their usual undeniable, playful chemistry.

It is not just suicidal soldiers and weird people in pubs that concerns the Doctor. He and

Sarah are pursued by sinister astronaut figures. They seem to be a combination of the Autons from 'Spearhead in Space' and the astronauts from 'The Ambassadors of Death', both seen in season 7. The costumes were designed by Barbara Lane, who had quite a pedigree on Doctor Who, having designed the look of the Axons in 'The Claws of Axos', satanic robes in 'The Dæmons' and Alpha Centauri in 'The Curse of Peladon'.

As Sarah has a chat with the suspicious locals, who have no memory of her previous visit years before, the Doctor investigates the Space Defence Station



and meets Guy Crayford, played by Milton Johns. Johns had previously appeared in Doctor Who in 'The Enemy of the World', playing Theodore Benik. Crayford is a believed dead British astronaut who, in fact, piloted his space freighter to the Kraals' home planet, Oseidon. The Kraals scanned Crayford and recreated Devesham and UNIT personnel from his memories. Johns is brilliant as the manipulated Crayford, convinced the aliens reconstructed him from the wreckage of his ship, despite losing his left eye. Johns gives a multi-layered performance: the obsequious toadie to Kraal leader Styggron; the determined would-be homecoming hero with the belief he is helping the Kraals survive and, ultimately, the crushed shell of a man who realises he has been used when he removes his eye patch to discover his eye is intact. It is a heartbreaking performance that underpins the story.

It is here we first get to meet Styggron. Children, including me, would have been thrilled at the arrival of a genuine monster, and I was certainly intrigued by the rubbery faced look of them. Producer Philip Hinchcliffe, however, was disappointed at the realisation of the Kraals, dubbing them "Humanoid rhinoceroses." Barbara Lane designed the costume for the aliens. Styggron, played by actor Martin Friend recalls the discomfort of the mask:

"The costume was the character. it dictated so much as to how I moved, and the mask dictated how I spoke. Once you've got your chin locked into it and you're emulating the expression on the mask, which was slightly pulled down, you're going to come out a bit grumpy."

There is a lot of running in 'The Android Invasion'. Not to mention diving into ponds to escape tracker dogs. Tom Baker insisted on doing this stunt himself and after ingesting stagnant water, had to be rushed to hospital to have his stomach pumped.

While the Doctor is taking a dip, Sarah has been captured by the Kraals and taken to who she believes is her old friend, Harry Sullivan. To be entirely accurate, it's an android duplicate of Harry. Once again, Ian Marter has to play an evil version of himself, as he did in his previous serial, 'Terror of the Zygons'. In 1975, Harry Sullivan cosplay was very popular!

Ah, Harry, my favourite male companion, here looking gorgeous in his Navy uniform (not seen since his inaugural story, 'Robot'). Harry was originally introduced as a character who could perform the more physical work an older Doctor may not have been able to carry off. Once Tom Baker was cast, Harry's role became somewhat superfluous. Not to me, I always loved him as a friend to The Doctor, and particularly Sarah. It was disappointing to see him mysteriously absent during 'Planet of Evil' and 'Pyramids of Mars', and a thrill to see him return here. Sadly, this would be Harry's last hurrah.

Harry's playful relationship with Sarah cemented him as a true childhood friend, and it was sad to see him depart again. Ian Marter's final story did not meet with his approval: "There was no real reason for Harry to be in at all." he explains. "My last scene was particularly frustrating as Harry just sort of fizzled out sitting tied up on the floor in the corner of a room. My own unful-

filled wish was that Harry could have been blown up while trying to save Sarah Jane, or something on those lines—a genuinely heroic exit instead of what I actually got.”

Sadly, other obligations prevented Ian from resuming the role for ‘The Five Doctors’: “John Nathan-Turner contacted me and was keen for me to appear, but by the time I was asked I was under contract to appear in a TV series in New Zealand. It was lovely to be asked, but perhaps it was better not to appear. You can’t cling on to a programme that you left nearly a decade ago.”

The Doctor rescues who he believes to be Sarah, but thanks to his bizarre obsession with ginger pop (really, with this and jelly babies, the main adversary of the Doctor should have been a dentist) he uncovers an android duplicate of her, leading to one of the most memorable cliff-hangers in the show’s history. That reveal is seared into the memories of a generation of children, as fake Sarah does an impressive impersonation of a real Sarah tumble down a non-

threatening bank, and her face falls off to reveal eerie circuitry. Philip Hinchcliffe was not happy with the original reveal in the script: “it didn’t really work, it didn’t make your flesh creep or deliver a shock, and I was very well known for really good cliff hangers.” Hinchcliffe was satisfied with the face falling off end-product: “I think it’s a wonderful shock moment.”

The real Sarah, face intact, escapes the Kraals and arrives in time to sonic the Doctor free from his artificial ivy bindings which were attaching him to the village Upper Cross, moments before the village evaporates. But that rescue is short lived as duplicate Harry takes the Doctor to Styggron. The always reliable Sarah saves the Doctor from Styggron’s literal mind-blowing machine and they enter Crayford’s rocket. Nation’s script hilariously contrasts the Doctor’s expectations with Sarah’s, as he describes their entry to Earth inside the space containers. Sarah is not impressed: “Providing we don’t burn up on re-entry, and aren’t suffocated on the way down, we’ll probably be



smashed to a pulp when we land.” To which the Doctor replies: “Sarah, you’ve put your finger on the one tiny flaw in our plan.” It is here we discover the Doctor has an android duplicate too.

Back on Earth, at the real Defence Space Station, the real Harry and Benton are awaiting Crayford’s rocket with Colonel Faraday. Faraday, played by Patrick Newell, was a stand in for Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. Actor Nicholas Courtney was peeved to miss out on the final UNIT story of the Seventies, due to the BBC’s indecision about his participation, which resulted in him losing a theatre role. When they asked him to join the cast of ‘The Android Invasion’, he was already committed to another theatre role, as he explains:

“They rang up again and said, ‘actually, we do want you for this one’, but by that time I’d got another job, and so I had to say, ‘sorry, can’t do,’ and the BBC had no claim because I wasn’t under contract. I was freelance. And that’s why Doctor Who had to get another army officer in to replace me.”

The containers arrive on Earth where Sarah meets the android Doctor and yet another duplicate of her. This leads to a hilariously dramatic dive through a window after the Doctor meets his duplicate, with Sarah melodramatically stage directing the daredevil Time Lord. This pales into insignificance when the two Doctors have a fight with each other. It is gloriously camp to me as an adult, but as a child, I was thrilled to see two Tom Bakers tussling on the screen.

Crayford learns from the android Doctor his rocket contains a deadly virus that will wipe out humanity, and he re-

alises he has been used by Styggron all along, he meets his end at the end of Styggron’s gun. The Doctor uses a radar to jam the android’s circuits, and it is here the programme enters plot hole territory. If the Doctor jammed the circuits, how was the android Doctor activated to deal with Styggron? Philip Hinchcliffe has admitted a scene was filmed to explain this, but studio time overran, and it was never used. Maybe a scene was also filmed to explain why, when Styggron falls on the virus that is supposed to wipe out all of Earth, it kills him and does not affect anyone else? Understandably, when the story was filmed, it was supposed to be viewed once, and not held up to scrutiny. Viewed now, it is quite a disappointing ending to an otherwise superb Doctor Who adventure.

‘The Android Invasion’ is brimful of everything that is great about Doctor Who. A fantastically involving story, the incendiary chemistry of the leads, androids, aliens, a goodbye to UNIT



THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS

Review by Andy Smith

For a horror-inclined child, growing up in 1970s Britain was glorious. The decade dripped with horror-themed ephemera for the kiddies. There were comics and annuals, sometimes including adaptations of Hammer films, and no end of wonderful books by the likes of Denis Gifford and Alan Frank which teased gory delights we wouldn't get to enjoy until years later. There were board games, glow-in-the-dark model kits and bubblegum cards. The legendary Top Trumps horror sets pitted classic movie monsters against some extraordinarily peculiar originals, such as the copyright-dodging Venusian Death Cell, a Sea Devil doing something unspeakable with a sickle. If you were a fan of both horror and Doctor Who then a visit from the ice cream van brought with it the agonising choice between a Count Dracula's Deadly Secret or a Dalek Death Ray. Then to top it all off, the BBC gave us four deliciously ghastly weeks of 'The Brain of Morbius'.

What's so curious about all this is that only the most poorly parented child at the time would have ever actually seen a horror film, apart from perhaps those occasions where classic Universal monsters were terrorising Abbott & Costello. By the mid-1970s Hammer films were being shown on the BBC but a skim through the BBC Genome shows they went out extremely late, usually as part of the Midnight Movies strand, and even the much milder Universal horrors were still considered late-night viewing.

Even if you were an adult, only those able and willing to stay up until 1 or 2 in the morning would have seen one on TV. Home video recorders were available but they were aimed primarily at the professional market and priced way beyond the means of most ordinary families.

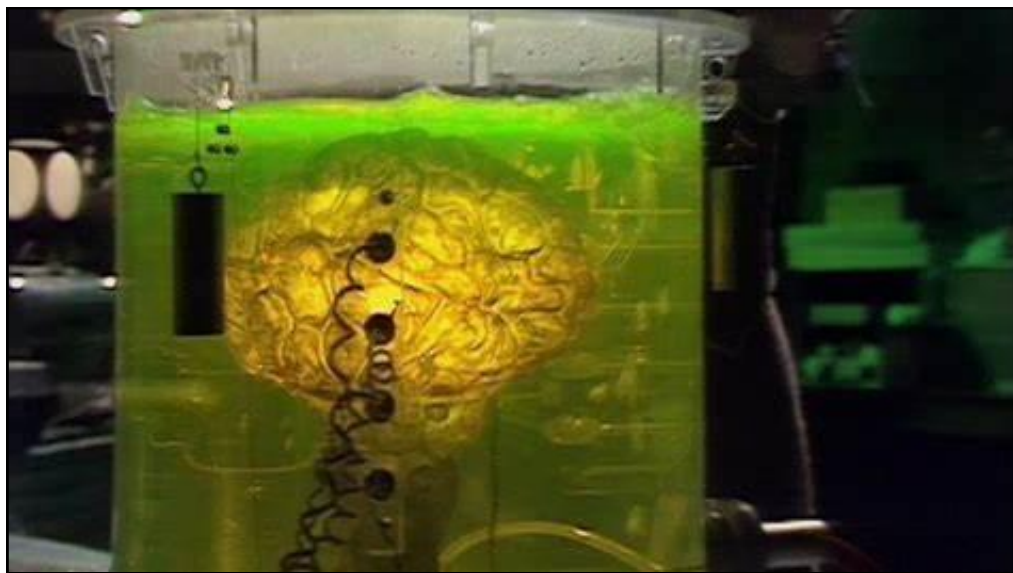
This is where 'The Brain of Morbius' really scored. Because it isn't just a bit like a Frankenstein film, in effect it *is* a Frankenstein film, made especially for us. More or less every box ticked by a Hammer Frankenstein is present and correct and presented no less vividly for the most part.

We begin with a vicious murder, just offscreen, and later see the victim's head set up to be experimented on. We see our hero narrowly talk his way out of being burned at the stake. Condo is gunned down by his master with a revolver, complete with exploding blood squibs. Then we have the disgusting lump of flesh that is the monster's body, mostly of alien body parts but no less revolting for that, with the single human arm the only hint of humanity about it. To top it all off, a brain in a jar, fully conscious and furious with its fate, one destined to become part of the monstrosity that is the completed Morbius reborn. There's so little holding back here, it's quite remarkable even for a period in the series' history that was notorious for sailing close to the wind when it came to depicting violence and scares.

Scary stuff was of course part of the show's appeal ever since Barbara Wright was terrorised by a Dalek plunger back in 1963, even earlier depending on how frightening you find cavepeople. The phrase "behind the sofa" had been in use since a Times article in 1973, if not before, and certain sections of the press had been raising concerns about the series' level of violence since the early Pertwee era. Season 13 alone had brought us no end of horrors by the time we land here on the planet Karn. There's a difference though between this and most of the earlier more horror-influenced stories. The show had always been happy to plunder other material for ideas, classic literature and popular films had provided no end of inspiration. The difference here is in how that material is used to develop the story. For example, and sticking with just this season, 'Terror of the Zygons' isn't really about the Loch Ness Monster, it's just a plot point or even a Hitchcockian MacGuffin. 'Planet of Evil' mashes together the concepts and imagery of *Forbidden Planet* and Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde to create something unique.

'Pyramids of Mars' seems ostensibly to be a riff on Mummy movies and the "real life" Curse of the Pharaohs but these are red herrings. 'The Brain of Morbius' though sticks to its guns and could broadly be transplanted to some fictional European province in the 19th century without having to change the story too much - one can easily imagine Frankenstein trying to bring Napoleon back, for example.

The reason for this is partly due to the behind-the-scenes tale of how the story came about. For those unfamiliar, this began as a Terrance Dicks story, a sort of Frankenstein with a twist. Instead of a man making a monster, what if it was a monster, specifically a robot, trying to make a man? The crux of his version is that the robot, Morbius' faithful servant, has no aesthetic sensibilities and creates a body which his master understandably finds hideous. Having delivered a first draft of the scripts Dicks went on holiday and was uncontactable when it was decided that the budget wouldn't stretch to a convincing robot. Robert Holmes took over writing du-



ties, swapping out Dicks' android for a more traditional "mad scientist". Upon his return an unhappy Dicks asked to be credited with "some bland pseudonym" and Holmes cheekily obliged by crediting it to Robin Bland.

Despite this major change, some of Dicks' work survives in the finished version. The Sisterhood was his idea, as was the spaceship graveyard. The name of the planet Karn and the monster's single oversized claw were both repurposed from his 1974 stage play *Doctor Who and the Daleks: Seven Keys to Doomsday*. The plot itself is broadly similar too, although according to Dicks none of his dialogue made the transition. The crux of the difference is in the differing approaches to the Frankenstein mythos itself. Whereas Dicks seems to have been inspired by Mary Shelley's 1818 novel (or more likely her more widely published 1831 revision), Holmes goes straight to the movies for his vision. I would say specifically the Hammer Horror series of Frankenstein films rather than the classic Universal iterations, although the former were inspired by the latter as well, especially after Universal became their distributor in America, allowing Hammer to access the earlier iconography free from the threat of Hollywood lawyers. Played in all but one Hammer film by Peter Cushing, this Baron Frankenstein is extremely driven, putting his goals above anything else, usually at a terrible cost. Those films don't actually follow a single continuity and his depiction varies accordingly. In some he's amoral and selfish but also kindly, in others truly wicked and not above murder to complete his projects. Solon here is firmly in the latter camp - urbane and witty but with a singular obsessive vision. The

fact that Peter Cushing himself was considered for the role speaks volumes. While Philip Madoc is truly wonderful in the role I still would give my left arm to have seen Cushing take it on.

The plot too uses familiar beats from the movies. An accident causing the brain to become damaged. Angry villagers hunting the monster with torches ablaze. The scientist's lumbering, deformed manservant who is actually kindlier than he seems. The scientist stealing from graves (here crashed spaceships) and even causing those deaths himself.

It's not all Hammer Horror of course because this is *Doctor Who* and the story is told in the context of that show's own mythos. This is where Robert Holmes puts his own stamp on proceedings and unbeknownst to him lit the blue touch paper on an argument that would rage for decades to come.

We're just four stories away from 'The Deadly Assassin', a tale which would reframe the Time Lords and depict them very differently from the way they had previously been seen, ruffling a few feathers within the nascent fandom of the day. However, it's this story which lays the groundwork for that and Holmes drops in quite a few clues about how he sees the Doctor's own people - most significantly, they can be vulnerable. We're spared a clunky infodump regarding Morbius' backstory so we have to piece it together from bits of dialogue dotted about the script (and for the purposes of this article putting aside later revelations from books and audio dramas). We're told that Morbius offered his people "greatness" but the pacifistic Time

Lords refused his offer. He gathered an army of over a million of “the scum of the galaxy” and based them on Karn, presumably in order to launch an attack on Gallifrey. It’s easy to miss the significance of this - at some point a million people or more knew about the Time Lords, a race who didn’t even get name-checked until the closing episodes of the sixth season. So much for the isolated, neutral observers of galactic events. Robert Holmes has form for this: Linx in ‘The Time Warrior’ knows of them too, even down to the previously unmentioned name of their home planet, and he’s from the 13th Century. When this story is set is unclear but it’s certainly far in our own future - the Doctor says so, plus we see a spacefaring Mutt from ‘The Mutants’ so it obviously takes place a good while after that story too. The reference to the Mutt, incidentally, was added by Holmes after it was decided to reuse one of those costumes - Dicks’ version (and his novelization) had an insect-like pilot named Krizz.

We also need to bear in mind that Solon is an Earth human, so it’s curious

how he would have even heard of Morbius, let alone join his cult, unless Morbius and his followers had been rather public, or perhaps sought him out. The Sisterhood too not only know of the Time Lords but have a pre-existing relationship with them. Their life-giving Elixir is used to help Time Lords through difficult regenerations, again a sign of vulnerability having to rely on, and identify themselves to, outsiders. Considering the Time Lords must occasionally visit the Sisterhood it also seems odd that they don’t even send a representative to give the Doctor his mission, leaving him to come to that conclusion himself. The Doctor may be wrong of course, there’s no hard evidence they sent him deliberately, but considering what’s at stake and who is waiting for him in the nearby castle it’s unlikely to have been a coincidence.

It’s not just the Time Lords as a whole who are portrayed in a different light here. One particular Time Lord is subject to a major revision as the Gallifreyan game of Mind Bending raises the question “are those faces really the



Doctor?"

Until quite recently it was possible to make a case for these being faces of Morbius' past regenerations, and I think it's fair to say that that was the tendency among fandom, although one has to jump through a few hoops to reach that conclusion. It was also much easier when all we had to go on were our memories and Dicks' 1977 Target novelisation, which notably brushes them off as something Sarah thought she may have briefly seen. Producer Philip Hinchcliffe has confirmed they were intended to be the Doctor, and indeed made the point that fans seemed happy to ignore this revelation. While taking the twelve regeneration limit, in 'The Deadly Assassin', at face value. I suspect the main line of resistance to this at the time came from the fact that if you include them then there's only one Doctor left before that limit is reached. Which seems a silly thing to worry about really, as if the BBC would cancel the series after the actor playing the "fifth" Doctor leaves due to a few seconds of screen time from years earlier. Such things are easily fixed, it's part of a writer's job to solve problems, and indeed 'The Five Doctors' with Borusa's offer to the Master of a whole new regenerative cycle does just that for this particular issue.

It is, I suppose, possible that Morbius had a penchant for historical Earth millinery but it's a stretch - the Doctor has form when it comes to hats even at this point in the show's history. It's also possible that the Doctor is playing a trick on Morbius, but there's no evidence for that. The dialogue during this scene is rather vague, and it's not really clear who wins the battle. If Morbius won, in

which case those faces were the Doctor, it somehow caused something in his brain-case to explode and drove him insane. If the Doctor won, causing that explosion and confirming it's Morbius on the screen, he almost died in the process. There's also the possibility of deadlock, as the Doctor mentions, which at face value looks like what happened here - they both lost and paid the price for that. Which doesn't really explain the faces either.

My personal view is that those are pre-Hartnell Doctors. Morbius wins, but the effort involved causes something to go very wrong for him - he's not exactly at his best despite his protestations to the contrary. The Doctor, having lost by being driven back through earlier incarnations (but as we now know, only some of them), collapses near death, with only the last of the Sisterhood's Elixir able to save him. I have no idea what I made of it at the time, other than it being a memorable and exciting scene. I was just six years old and although I remembered the Pertwee Doctor well I doubt I'd even seen a picture of Troughton or Hartnell's incarnations at that point, so the idea that there were ones before them wouldn't have seemed at all odd to me.

More than forty years later it was confirmed onscreen that these are some of the faces of the so-called Timeless Child, a revelation that has proved just as contentious among fandom, probably even more so. Whether we'll ever find out more about this is anyone's guess but I don't think there's any getting away from the fact that the Doctor used to look like various BBC staff members on a jolly to the wardrobe department.

Putting aside the lore, inspirations and indeed controversy, what of 'The Brain of Morbius' as a piece of television on its own? I think it really stands up although as is often pointed out it is true that the story makes very little sense. Dicks' original concept was a neat SF idea that had a reasonable degree of logic behind it, but making his robot human undermines that. Solon's "chop suey" body is utterly revolting, through no fault of his own, so you can see why Morbius is so horrified. Quite why he hasn't been prepared for that I don't know, nor why, assuming he can regenerate, he can't just throw himself over a cliff and get a brand new proper body. As mentioned earlier it's odd that the Time Lords don't show up in person, rather than let the Doctor stumble into the fray unprepared. The major puzzle of course is quite why Solon doesn't think to just put Morbius' brain in the Doctor's body. Almost all of these plot issues, and there's many more than just those I mentioned, could have been addressed with just a line of dialogue here and there. For whatever reason, perhaps simply a lack of time, they

simply weren't.

None of that actually matters though, not to me anyway. Doctor Who, certainly in its 20th century format, is an action adventure series designed to be watched in short, weekly bursts, preferably while eating crumpets and malt loaf served on a hostess trolley (this is exactly how my family experienced it in the 1970s). Incident is more important than plot here. Not one of us would have got to the end of part four and suddenly asked why Solon's plan was a bit rubbish, or why he couldn't use Condo or one of the Sisterhood for a body, or how Morbius intended to leave Karn after he was fixed. It's all about the moments - the horrors, the rich dialogue, the little jokes, the bold design and the superb score. That score is one of Dudley Simpson's best and cleverest - note how he introduces electronics for the mind-bending scene, as the tone shifts from horror to SF.

It doesn't all work. The spaceship graveyard, a forced perspective model that was part of the actual set (as was



Solon's castle), fails to convince and is rightly shown only briefly in close-up. Some aspects of the Sisterhood's costumes look cheap, notably their jewellery made from spray-painted plastic spoons, and all their dancing around and chanting gets a little wearing. Solon's death is rather thrown away, possibly to lessen the impact of our "never cruel or cowardly" hero committing straight up murder.

These are minor gripes though. We have terrific performances from almost everyone, and Philip Madoc's Solon is as memorable a villain as we ever had. It's a testament to the production that Madoc, an actor who had an extraordinary career in serious drama, always spoke fondly and positively of this part. Tom Baker is on fire here, almost literally if stories about the execution scene are to be believed. From his improvised gag about wanting a glass of water to his hard as nails delivery of "I doubt it, Morbius!", he proves himself to be a master at turning on a sixpence and he's rarely been more alien, something

always at the forefront of Baker's mind in his approach to the part.

As mentioned, I was six when I first saw this and I think I loved it. The second time I was fifteen, when the BBC released it on home video and despite being an hour long omnibus edit I still loved it. But my favourite memory of this story was from a few years before. I'm ten and in hospital having my tonsils out, which back then took a week for some peculiar reason. My mum is visiting and offers to read to me, and my chosen book is Doctor Who and 'The Brain of Morbius' by Terrance Dicks. My mum is very well-spoken and in her lovely, almost R.P. tones, she's telling me about Doctor Who almost being burned to death and a monster made from bits and pieces of bodies and an angry brain in a jar when she suddenly exclaims, "Andrew, this is horrible!". Yes, Mum, yes it is. Keep going...



THE SEEDS OF DOOM

Review by Tony Jordan

Have we been here before.....?

This is it folks. The big one. The Daddy of them all. For me 'The Seeds of Doom', pure and simple, is the greatest Doctor Who story of them all. After two seasons, it was a time when the creative juices of Philip Hinchcliffe and Robert Holmes were in full flow. It was a time when they were at their imperious best. Season 13 had already given us their take on the Loch Ness Monster ('Terror of the Zygons') *Forbidden Planet* ('Planet of Evil'), The Mummy ('Pyramids of Mars') and Frankenstein ('The Brain of Morbius'). And now, for the six-part finale, we were to get *The Thing from Another World* meets The Quatermass Experiment and The Avengers episode 'Man-Eater of Surrey Green', both of which are well worth watching by the way. More on The Avengers later.

I think it may have been the great Terrence Dicks who said that a six-part Doctor Who story is, in effect, a two-parter and a four-parter put together. 'The Invasion of Time' is a classic example of this (although the other way round), and 'The Seeds of Doom' is right up there with it. And to think it was fairly hastily conceived after the original season finale, 'The Hand of Fear', fell through only to be resurrected for the Season 14. Hinchcliffe and Holmes turned to Robert Banks Stewart, a man with an extensive CV and having already been impressed by his work at the start of the season.

So we've got the Producer and Script Editor both at the peak of their powers. The same can also be said of The Doctor and his companion. The chemistry between Tom Baker and Elisabeth Sladen is simply magnificent and a joy to behold. Baker clearly relishes his dialogue as well as the numerous interactions with both Harrison Chase and Scorby. And I might as well raise my hat to both Tony Beckley and John Challis right now. Their performances are superb, allowing the characters to develop well beyond what was written on paper.

As if the above wasn't enough to give us a masterpiece, Douglas Camfield had made a triumphant return to Doctor Who after a five year break with 'Terror of the Zygons'. It was enormously sensible for him to bookend the season, which he duly did. As ever, Camfield refused to work with Dudley Simpson and so for a second time he commissioned Geoffrey Burgon to provide the incidental music. I'm a passionate fan of what Burgon produced across these two stories, his work instils a tremendous sense of foreboding and perfectly accompanies Dougie's directorial style.

Talking of which, a young Graeme Harper worked alongside Camfield as Production Assistant. Graeme has long extolled the virtues of his mentor who took an incredibly keen individual and helped shape his protégé into the legendary director he became. Back in the 1960's, indeed into 1970, as with so

many directors Camfield had his own television version of rep company. Hence Kevin Stoney twice villainised for him, first as Mavic Chen and secondly as Tobias Vaughn. I've long wondered if he was available for Seeds, as you can absolutely picture him playing Chase. Having said that, Tony Beckley's performance was utterly sublime.

But going back to his rep company, Camfield employed his wife Petra Dunn on no less than three occasions and, although only a fleeting cameo, in Seeds he managed to find a role for Ian Fairburn who is probably best remembered as the pathetic Gregory from The Invasion.

UNIT has clearly moved on from what we saw in Seasons 7 to 12 and none of the former regulars appear here. Nick Courtney was offered the chance to reprise his role as Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart but declined owing to existing work commitments, so it was written that the Brig was in Geneva.

I think the story benefits from being filmed entirely on video, for me it adds to the pace of the location work. Perhaps this lends even more to the oft

quoted Avengers style. But why not, is there any harm in that? Hinchcliffe and Holmes are lauded for borrowing ideas, and The Avengers was a massively successful programme throughout the 1960's. Indeed Banks Stewart had written two stories, 'The Master Minds' and 'Quick-Quick Slow Death', for Series 4. Interestingly The New Avengers premiered just months after Seeds.

I can't write about 'The Seeds of Doom' without mentioning the tragic character of Arnold Keeler, as portrayed by Mark Jones. If you ever wanted an embodiment of pathos, then that's what you get from Jones' stunning performance. And I can't ignore Emilia Ducat! Of course, Philip Hinchcliffe tried to, as he wasn't keen on the character, but Sylvia Coleridge puts in a splendid turn, chewing the scenery wherever and whenever possible in competition with Tony Beckley!

I was going to go on about Mary Whitehouse, but have little doubt that her name will appear in reviews of other Season 13 and 14 stories, and will leave that to my peers.

Ian Berriman is quoted as saying the following about 'The Seeds of Doom': "Often bleakly grotesque, blessed with an eerie, mournful score and shot with real brio, this is a rare Who six-parter that you can consume in one sitting, with nary a moment of boredom." I can't disagree with any of that. This really is Doctor Who at its zenith, never again would it be quite so wonderful.

.....Or are we yet to come?



THE MASQUE OF MANDRAGORA

Review by Christine Grit

'The Masque of Mandragora' is one of the many Fourth Doctor Stories I remember well, but not because of Tom or because of Elisabeth, or because of the excellent costumes. No it is because of the location at Portmeirion of course, and the fact that it's actually a historical! The Dalek stories are my favourites, but I love historicals, whether there's a Sci-Fi twist or not.



I've often been to Italy. To the North with the beautiful lakes and watery Venice, to the middle with Tuscany, the Marche, Umbria and Lazio for the paintings, the Etruscan and Roman heritage and further south with the incomparable Naples and the caves at Matera and the Florence of Baroque art: Lecce. And I haven't even mentioned Sicily and other islands. The atmosphere of Italian coastal towns, especially in the North, is rather difficult to describe but once you've visited one or more, it is never to be forgotten.

When I watched Mandragora for the first time (way past my youth as some-

how, I missed it then) I thought the story took place in Italy. Obviously, it is possible to pretend such on a set with the right angles, props, and lighting but it didn't look like one (apart from the Mandragora Helix scenes and the TARDIS interior at the beginning). The places where people went - except for the underground stuff - looked pretty real to me. It was not until I watched the extras on the DVD and saw Philip Hinchcliffe explain it was filmed in Portmeirion that I realised. But I had never heard of the location (my knowledge of The Prisoner came much, much later) and had to look it up on Wikipedia. Here I found lots of information about the place itself, it's creator in the 1920's, and it's Italianate looks. Wikipedia had some pictures too which impressed me. It still looked Italian and seemed an interesting place to visit.

So I did. Four times now with a fifth in the planning. It is a lovely, quaint, place to wander around, have a coffee, look at the buildings and walk alongside the nearby coast through the woodlands before enjoying a pasta for lunch. Luckily I have only spent time there when the weather was nice (blue skies and sunny), if perhaps not always with (the Italian) temperatures to match. Nonetheless it still feels very North Italian even if some very British cottages are mixed in. If you ever spend time in North Wales, do take a look there. It is National Trust so there is an entry fee, but it is so worthwhile. You can try and



identify places and buildings from the series (though not the oranges Sarah picks) and be just as flabbergasted as I was by Clough Williams-Ellis' creation of the early 20th century.



The story may not be a real historical, with the Sci-Fi twist, a religion that never could have existed at the time and probably quite a few other anachronisms as well, but it has a real Italian Renaissance feel to it, not only because of the wonderful costumes and the Italian feel of setting, but also because of the predictions by the astrologers (even though the line between forecasting and supposed witchcraft could be rather thin), and the delightful backstabbing by Count Federico. There is a book called *Vendetta* by Hugh Bicheno like this, with condottieri (aristocratic war leaders), lust, treachery, and rivalry. It details the rivalry between two men, each of which fits the likes of Federico. The book shows these rivalries started in the Renaissance in similar places to the fictional San Martino where 'The Masque of Mandragora' takes place. It is no surprise that the general distrust in governments by the Italian people also starts in the Renaissance!

If something is missing, it is that the viewer has to wait until 'City of Death' which takes place much, much later to see the other things for which the Italian Renaissance is known; the new developments in art using perspective, playing with light and darkness and the anatomy of the human body. Even then art gets reduced to its monetary value, so it can be used to finance Count Scarlioni's time-travel scheme. The Doctor denies it, wishing to prove that art is something else, but unmistakably Scarlioni's mind (or was it Tancredi's?) works that way.

The story itself is not really that innovative. We have seen masked villains in Doctor Who often enough, just as we've seen Sarah earmarked for being



er they are working together or not. And even if you now know that the Dark Ages weren't as dark and superstitious as sometimes thought (even Bede realised the earth wasn't flat and that was in the 700's AD), and the Renaissance period not so enlightened as commonly presented (and certainly not the start of civilisation after the Barbarian Medieval times), you still wish to prevent the loss of all knowledge and learning.

the sacrificial lamb, whether it is by monks, followers of an ancient cult or a group of not so peaceful Exillons. Having said that, the story still manages to remain rather exciting. You really want to know what happens next. I enjoyed seeing the secondary console room, just as I enjoyed the whole notion of a dangerous Helix ruining the development of humanity on Earth.. You can't help but root for Giuliano and Marco, the sympathetic characters, just as Federico and Hieronymus will be disliked wheth-

I started by mentioning it is the Italian lookalike town and the genuine feel of the Renaissance within the story make it a serial to remember, but there are many positive aspects that come together well in the story as a whole. It is a pity that the Target novelisation is somewhat difficult to get hold of.



THE HAND OF FEAR

Review by Jackie Green

Elisabeth Sladen's decision to leave *Doctor Who* was made during the filming of 'The Sontaran Experiment' in Season 12 following a compliment made by new producer Philip Hinchcliffe. Philip was impressed with how she handled a scene which involved Sarah being captured with ropes at the top of a hill during a location shoot in Dartmoor. The comment made her realise that he really did not know anything about her abilities as an actress and she was convinced that in time he was bound to want to bring in his own choice of companion. That evening she made the decision that Sarah would leave when she was still popular and that would be when she decided, and not when she was pushed.

The idea for 'The Hand of Fear' came from the 1960 feature film *The Hands of Orlac*. Robert Holmes explained the concept to *Doctor Who Magazine*, "It was about this pianist whose disembodied hand went around strangling people, and I suggested that if this hand were an alien hand..." Turning to Bob Baker and Dave Martin to write the serial, he presented them with a two-page outline. Dave commented, "The severed hand crawling around has been in so many horror films, but that's no reason not to nick it." Bob agreed it was a good plot, "The idea of cloning is commonplace now, but at the time, we were at the forefront of tomorrow's world."

On the strength of their ideas for the

serial, Baker and Martin were hired to write a six-part story intended to close Season 13. This would include the death of Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart! When Hinchcliffe read the scripts, he had major concerns and decided to shelve them for further development work. A last-minute replacement story was commissioned from Robert Banks Stewart titled 'The Seeds of Doom'. Hinchcliffe and Holmes were aware by now that Elisabeth Sladen was planning on leaving the show during 1976 and so began discussing the options for the departure of Sarah. Director Douglas Camfield had pitched a story called *The Lost Legion* that would have seen the death of Sarah, but Hinchcliffe felt the scripts were unworkable. Instead, they went back to Baker and Martin and asked them to reduce their story count from six to four episodes and to incorporate the departure of Sarah.

Bob Baker and Dave Martin had met in Bristol during the late 1960's and decided to form a writing partnership. One of their early projects was a script for a pilot episode of a sitcom called *A Man's Life*, about a young army recruit, based on the experiences of their mutual friend, the future TV chef, Keith Floyd. The pilot was never made but it came to the attention of Terrance Dicks who asked them to submit some ideas for the upcoming series of *Doctor Who*. After being commissioned to write an opening episode, they began working on a Second Doctor story titled, 'Doctor Who and the Gift' which evolved into the Third Doctor story, 'The Claws of

Axos'. Nicknamed "The Bristol Boys" by the Doctor Who production teams, they would go on to write another seven serials for Doctor Who between 1971 and 1979 with Baker going solo for his final contribution to the series, the Fourth Doctor story, 'Nightmare of Eden'. Their most famous creation was that of the Doctor's canine companion K9 who first appeared in 'The Invisible Enemy' in 1977.

The Doctor and Sarah land in a quarry in present day England and are caught up in a rock-clearing explosion. Sarah is found unconscious, clutching an ancient, semi-fossilised hand, its ring placing her under its control. When Sarah awakes in hospital, she begins to hear a voice in her head telling her 'Eldrad must live'. Heading to the nearest nuclear generator she breaks in. The hand thrives on radiation allowing it to regenerate into a fully animated silicon statue, with the face and form of a woman. Eldrad convinces the Doctor she was the victim of alien attackers and now she wants to return to her world to see if she can lead her people again. The Doctor and Sarah take her to Kastria and discover that it is now a dead planet, a frozen wasteland ever since vital thermal barriers were destroyed. Eldrad is caught in one of the series of traps left by her successor, but she regenerates and is restored to her true, male form. He tells the Doctor and Sarah that it was he who had both created and later destroyed the barriers after Kastria's rulers had refused his demands to become Emperor. He is outraged when it is revealed

that the Kastrian race had opted for final oblivion rather than take the chance that he would return to try and take control of their species once again. When he decides that he wants to conquer Earth instead the Doctor uses his scarf as a tripwire, causing Eldrad to fall into a bottomless crevasse. Back in the TARDIS the Doctor receives a command to return home to Gallifrey but it is a journey he must take without Sarah.

Director duties went to Lennie Mayne who had previously directed during Jon Pertwee's tenure as the Third Doctor which included the first multi-Doctor story, 'The Three Doctors'. Lennie was an ex-dancer, born in Sydney, Australia



to British expatriates. In the early Fifties he decided to move to his parents' homeland and was soon appearing in London's West End. During a production of *Can-Can* in 1954 he met dancer Frances Pidgeon, and they married in 1956. Lennie went on to become a choreographer before completing a BBC directors' training course, earning his first credits on 1967 episodes of *Mickey Dunne*. His wife joined him in his last two *Doctor Who* serials, uncredited as a handmaiden in 1974's 'The Monster of Peladon' and as Miss Jackson in 'The Hand of Fear'. During the mid-Seventies his directorial credits included *Warship*, *The Brothers* and *Softly Softly: Task Force*. Sadly, 'The Hand of Fear', would be the last time Lennie worked on *Doctor Who* as on the 20th May 1977, at the age of forty-nine, he tragically died in a boating accident, when a dinghy he was using on the English Channel was capsized by a freak wave, and the search and rescue team were unable to find him. Elisabeth remembered how Lennie was such fun to work with if not a little bit blood-thirsty! The first scenes filmed on 'The Hand of Fear' were the rock explosions in the quarry which meant that she had to be buried under rubble and Lennie was happy for her to stay there as long as possible so he could get the perfect shot!

My earliest memory of *Doctor Who* is the Third Doctor meeting Sarah and I instantly loved her. Though I didn't know it at the time the character of Sarah was a change from the previous female companions. Barry Letts wanted the new companion to be very much her own person, someone of today, with her own job, who questions everything and so Sarah was written as an

investigative journalist who was confident, resourceful, with an inquisitive mind and Elisabeth played her to perfection. In 2012, Toby Whithouse, writer of Sarah's return to the series in 2006's *School Reunion*, said "She changed the companion from being a rather helpless hysteric to being a feisty, opinionated, strong equal to The Doctor. And, at the time, you know that was quite an extraordinary thing to do. That was not the role the companion, or women, were meant to be playing. They were meant to be playing the victim, they were meant to be decoration. I think what Lis Sladen did with that character is quite extraordinary. We forget how revolutionary she was at the time."

Elisabeth puts in a great performance as she plays the Sarah, we all love, and the Sarah taken over by Eldrad. There is a reason why the phrase "Eldrad must live" remains in the memory of so many fans and that was down to the way she delivered it. Philip Hinchcliffe commented that he really enjoyed the performance she gave, when she was under Eldrad's spell, as he felt it gave an edge to the story. Elisabeth did not agree and in hindsight thought she should have played those scenes much quicker. The whole performance was not one of her favourites and it always surprised her how popular the serial seemed to be with fans.

What really sticks in my memory is the outfit that Sarah wore in this story. Known as the 'Andy Pandy' costume it consisted of a red top, striped dungarees, stripy socks, red shoes, and a bandana. The dungarees were bought from a shop in Kensington High Street called *Bus Stop*, which was very trendy at the

time, and stars were then sewn onto the front of the dungarees to make them a little different. Elisabeth was keen to show through this costume the transformation the character had undergone while travelling with the Doctor. She was no longer the Sarah that had arrived with a suit and shoulder bag. The character had experienced so much, she had changed, and the clothes reflected that. The costume has certainly become iconic with fans and is one that I have seen many times at conventions.

A real coup for the production team was securing permission to spend two days filming inside and outside of the Oldbury Nuclear Power Station. Dave Martin told *Doctor Who Magazine*, "We rang them up and said 'We're writing for Doctor Who and we want to set it in a power station. Can we come along?' They showed us virtually everything. The BBC had never got into a power station before then." Opened in 1967, the power station had two Magnox reactors producing 424 megawatts in total which was enough electricity on a typical day to serve an urban area twice the size of Bristol. It was shut down in 2012 but it will take many years to clear the site with the final stage planned from 2096 to 2102. Director Lennie Mayne took full advantage of the location incorporating the many platforms and ladders that existed within the site to great effect. Elisabeth recalled that during the final chase scene she felt like her legs were going to drop off from continually going up and down one of the metal ladders as Lennie kept shouting when she reached the top, 'Could you do it again but this time...' which resulted in her struggling to walk the next day!

I really liked the character of Eldrad, in female form, who was wonderfully played by Judith Paris. The fantastic costume and gravelly voice helped to create a memorable alien. A pitch modulator was used to lower Judith's voice, though she was not particularly happy when she was told this, and she found wearing the costume an ordeal. She had to be stitched into her outfit which meant she was unable to sit down and the rock crystals on her face prevented her from being able to eat and drink during breaks in filming. Barbara Lane designed the costume and Hinchcliffe recalled how she had come up with an ingenious way of creating Eldrad's blue eyes with the director. "Judith wore material eye pads which reflected the key colour for the chroma key and then the blue was laid into her eyes because all these effects had to be done as the programme was being recorded live." Stephen Thorne took over from Judith as the male form of Eldrad which did not work nearly as well. Stephen puts in a good performance, but the character turns into a stereotypical shouting villain, and I was glad when those scenes were over!

One of my favourite scenes was the ending of episode one when Sarah opens the box to discover that the hand of Eldrad has grown back its finger and is starting to move around. The effect was achieved by using a hand inside a latex mock-up and it produces a great cliffhanger.

In the previous story, 'The Masque of Mandragora', we discovered that the TARDIS has a secondary console room and in 'The Hand of Fear' we see that the Doctor is now using it. I really liked the Victorian style design by Barry

Newbery which had wooden panel walls, stained glass windows and a smaller console. The idea behind it was that the TARDIS had many rooms in it, which had never been seen before, along with more than one control room and so there could be lots of design periods in the TARDIS just as the Doctor had travelled to lots of different civilisations and cultures over many time periods. Since Doctor Who's return to our television screens in 2005 fans have got used to the regular makeover of the TARDIS but in 1976 there had not been such a visual departure from what we had seen before which was very exciting! I was disappointed when the new console room disappeared after only one season.

Tom Baker is on fine form as always and the chemistry between him and Elisabeth Sladen, after thirteen serials together, could not have been better. Elisabeth told Doctor Who magazine, "I adored working with Tom. It was just magic to find someone who you were so in tune with, and he was so supportive." Tom felt the same way, "I just found Elisabeth quick-witted and so willing to laugh and go along with me.... she frequently agreed with what I thought was funny or how you do these detailed things. It was only in the detail that we were really able to be influential – obviously we couldn't change the narrative or ask for other sets. But in the details of how we react...I thought Elisabeth was wonderful..."

As a fan I really did not want Sarah to leave. She was my first companion and had helped to steer me through the shock of losing Jon Pertwee and accepting Tom Baker as the new Doctor. If Sarah liked him then I would too! Their final scene together was perfect,

but it didn't start off that way and when Elisabeth received the script she was appalled. Feeling so upset that it seemed as though the writers had never watched Sarah and the Doctor before, she scrawled rude words all over it! Fortunately, Philip Hinchcliffe and Robert Holmes agreed, telling Tom and Elisabeth that they were the only ones that knew how the Doctor and Sarah would handle this. And they did. There were no tears or hugs and yet it was heartbreaking to watch. You knew how they both felt without needing a big dramatic speech to convey that. Sarah simply says, 'Don't forget me' and the Doctor responds, 'Oh, Sarah, don't you forget me.' As Sarah exits the TARDIS it ends on a lighter note as she tells a Labrador that 'He blew it!' when she realises the Doctor has not left her in Croydon as planned and she skips off, whistling 'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me A Bow Wow'.

There are many positives to find in 'The Hand of Fear' as I enjoyed all the performances from the cast, along with a wonderful musical score from Dudley Simpson, great location choices and superb direction from Lennie Mayne. But it is Elisabeth Sladen that steals the show and the eight-year-old me would never forget the time I had to say goodbye to the brilliant Sarah Jane Smith.



THE DEADLY ASSASSIN

Review by David Griffiths

Ah, 'The Deadly Assassin'. Who could fail to be impressed by an assassin who is also deadly? The title was a marked improvement on its working title of The Dangerous Assassin. We can only assume the earliest draft was titled The Mildly Hazardous Assassin. Broadcast across the show's thirteenth anniversary in 1976, the story would prove to be unlucky for some. Namely, the President of Gallifrey, prospective Doctor Who companions and twitchy fans who might be opposed to the expanding lore of the Doctor's home planet.

The first part of the serial was broadcast 30 October 1976. It would be the first episode of Doctor Who in which our hero travelled alone, which was a real treat for those who enjoyed Tom Baker soliloquising.

The Doctor has a vision in which he assassinates the President of Gallifrey. In order to ensure this absolutely doesn't happen, the Doctor heads straight for the Panopticon to take a gander at the 'very much alive for now' President. Finding a sniper rifle on a balcony, the Doctor sneaks over to take a look just as the President is shot - the Doctor now framed for murder. There's a lot to take in during part one, as we get our first insights into Time Lord society; the Panopticon, the Castellan and the fact that the Sorting Hat put the Doctor in to the Prydonian house when he was a wee muggle.

Speaking of muggles, we first hear of

the unfortunately name Shobogans, who appear to be some sort of Gallifreyan hoodie. The story refers to them as vandals or hooligans but subsequent stories have identified them as the lower classes of Gallifreyan society; they built the Citadel and in return Rassilon built a Rampart to keep them out - part of his efforts to Make Gallifrey Great Again, no doubt.

In the most spectacular use of Red Tape in history, the Doctor invokes Article 17 to run for President thereby sparing his execution. Why no other Time Lords have thought to launch an election campaign after a spot of murder is unclear. You'd think this would have been right up The Master's street. As it happens, it just might have been. The Master is back, looking as though he's hit the sun beds a bit too hard. The Doctor's premonition was The Master's mentally projected wish list which had been sent through The Matrix - which is part of the Amplified Panotropic Computer Net, which itself sounds like a 70's prog rock band.

The Doctor then sets off to search for The Master within the Matrix itself and finds himself in a mindscape that looks remarkably like the Surrey countryside. The Master stalks The Doctor by way of a Hunter who turns out to be a Goth - who knew they had those on Gallifrey? This Goth has been going along with The Master's schemes so as to be the front-runner in the next presidential election. Quite why he didn't

just off the President like the Doctor got away with is never explained.

Desperately trying to work out the Master's scheme, the Doctor enquires as to what becoming President entails. Does he do this because it ties in to the Master's plot or because he's starting to come round to the idea of wearing a big collar? Contrary to the belief that the President represents the democratic rights of the Time Lords, it seems the most noteworthy part of the job involves being given a sash and a key. That's right; the President of Gallifrey is the equivalent of a Time Lord May Queen. But the twist here is that the May Queen gown and tiara control a black hole, which would actually make a cool sequel to *Children of the Stones* (*Children of the Hole*? Actually, best not...)

With this revelation, the Doctor deduces the Master is planning to use the

sash and key of Rassilon to gain a new regenerative cycle. But the disruption caused by this would destroy Gallifrey and countless other worlds, which does make one wonder why the controls are hidden in such innocuous objects as a sash and a key. Throw the sash on a spin cycle and you could destroy the universe.

Confronting the Master, the Doctor saves Gallifrey (mostly) and makes a run for it before his presidential campaign can even begin, presumably taking some top secret documents with him to hide in a toilet at Space-Mar A Lago.

As you can see, 'The Deadly Assassin' is a *lot*. It has been argued that Doctor Who wouldn't see such a shake up of its established lore until the Chris Chibnall era forty years later. It would also be the first time a regenerated Master had appeared; Roger Delgado having died in 1973. This second ap-



pearance of the Master was portrayed by Peter Pratt, who was best known for his comic roles in Gilbert and Sullivan operas. Sadly, we never heard his Master sing. Although Pratt has also passed, it would be a shame if Big Finish never produces my pitch of The Master starring in HMS Pinafore Keys To Doomsday.

It may not be the most accessible story for newbies, but it has become the definitive text on Gallifrey and the Time Lords, a savvy political thriller that encapsulates the decade in which it was broadcast. Not bad for a show that was described at this time as “tea-time brutality for tots.” Admittedly, that’s quite a tagline, which should be used as part of the search algorithm when the show is distributed by Disney.

As cool a catchphrase as that sounds, the quote can be attributed to someone who found Doctor Who decidedly not cool. Conservative activist Mary Whitehouse took exception to our beloved show, amongst other things. Whilst she had very strong opinions about a number of Who serials, ‘The Deadly Assassin’ was the story which finally drew an apology from Director General of the BBC, Sir Charles Curran. Whitehouse took exception to one of the serials cliffhangers, in which The Doctor was left in mortal danger. It wasn’t so much about her own reaction, she was quick to explain, rather “the effect of such material – especially in a modern setting – upon the very young children still likely to be watching.”

In hindsight, we can see why the BBC felt the need to apologise for this one; especially when compared to the previous stories for which she had taken ex-

ception. Her previous complaints had centred on the brutality of the Daleks (I’m claiming that title, Big Finish!), strangulation by vegetable matter (great name for a prog rock album, written by Amplified Panotropic Computer Net on their 1976 tour of Japan) and the making of Molotov cocktails (stirred, not shaken – whatever you do, don’t shake). There was very little chance of children encountering any of these horrors in 1970’s Britain, but the cliffhanger to ‘The Deadly Assassin’ was most definitely something that children could relate to.

In a moment which will forever be remembered as one of the greatest Who cliffhangers, the Doctor is pursued through The Matrix by a hunter, who we’ll later find to be Goth. As the episode reaches its climax, the hunter puts The Doctor in deadly peril (that’s Goths for you) and children across the country were left to worry for an entire week about how their beloved hero might escape. After all, he had no companion for this story to ride to his rescue.

Picture the scene on Monday morning at the school playground; children arriving sick with worry, so distraught that they’ve forgotten all about how weird a loophole Article 17 is to the Time Lord justice system. Their trauma shared, the children couldn’t shake those closing images of the episode from their mind. The Doctor had his foot caught in a railway line with a model train hurtling at a slow-but-steady pace towards him with no means of escape. It was a fate worse than death. The Doctor would indeed be injured, perhaps his scarf slightly rumpled even by the train which was sure to derail.

The horror was intensified by the use of smoke, which may have also gotten in to his eyes and caused them to water. And that would hamper his attempts to thwart The Master if he had to keep rubbing them throughout the episode. Mary Whitehouse was correct to be concerned about the effect of the modern setting. Whilst the use of narrow-gauge railways had been in the decline since the Second World War, railway enthusiasts were stepping in to preserve the railways as part of British industrial heritage. By the 1970's, they were well on the way to becoming the tourist attractions that we still endure today. But it wouldn't be until the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority for Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems) Regulations 2006 that the Office of Rail and Road took ownership of the regulation of minor and heritage railways. Now that you have the same context all children

would have had in 1976, you can see the dangers posed by unregulated narrow-gauge railways. It brings a whole new perspective to Mary Whitehouse's complaint.

Transport yourself back to the autumn of 1976. A leap year. Brotherhood of Man win the Eurovision Song Contest representing the UK with 'Save All Your Kisses For Me'. Viking 1 lands on Mars. The Seychelles joins the United Nations. The Fairchild Channel F games console is released. The megamouth shark is days away from being discovered off the coast of Hawaii.

To distract you from the terrible anxiety caused by this cliffhanger, your parents take you out for the day - perhaps even to Brockham Museum, where the engine stock for 'The Deadly Assassin' was kept (a former Lime Works, the location became a Site of Special Scien-



tific Interest in the 70's – presumably at Mary Whitehouse's insistence that children be kept from re-enacting any tea-time brutality). The whistle of an engine may pierce the crisp, foggy air. Frozen in terror, thinking about the poor Doctor, you find your foot caught in the rails. The train hurtling towards you...

If such a vision doesn't give you nightmares, picture those sadistic little children who might want to see a similar fate befall their sibling; tying them to a miniature railway line like some tiny cliched damsel in distress. (As a side-note to this, despite the 'damsel tied to the railroad tracks' being the very picture of a cinema trope, there's not much evidence that it was ever used on film beyond spoofs of the melodramas that didn't contain the trope. But I digress even further.)

The BBC had a dilemma. Weeks away from broadcasting their next instalment of A Ghost Story for Christmas – the chilling railway centred story, 'The Signalman' – they caved in to the demands of Mary Whitehouse and issued an

apology and edited the story for future broadcasts. One can only assume The Signalman was also re shot to take place on a standard gauge railway to avoid the additional horror of reliving the trauma caused by 'The Deadly Assassin'.

And so, this cliffhanger passes in to history as one of the greatest of all time. As for the Doctor, he sidestepped that tiny train like a boss. But further perils awaited, when just one episode later his hair was washed in a lovely country stream by Goth. Some commentators believe that this was the actual cliffhanger that offended Mary Whitehouse, but to paraphrase another presidential candidate – that's just Fake Who's.



THE FACE OF EVIL

Review by Paul Burns

Watching Doctor Who in your formative years, there was nothing more traumatic or seismic as a companion leaving, and nothing more tantalising and exciting than a new companion entering the TARDIS. Ten year old me was coming to terms with the departure of Sarah Jane Smith, and I did not want the Doctor to be without a friend. The very last thing I wanted was a serial with the Doctor being friendless and horrible, with a load of old men in silly robes and funny collars talking endlessly about nonsense until the crispy Master turned up. But enough about 'The Deadly Assassin', where is the next gal pal for the Doctor?

Broadcast on the first day of 1977, 'The Face of Evil' introduced the nation to the character of Leela. In fact, the very first scene after the credits has Leela onscreen: fiercely standing up to the elders of her Sevateem tribe, and denouncing the existence of their god, Xoanon. Here is a character with her own agency, denouncing patriarchal authority. Former female companions had their own strengths: Liz Shaw had intelligence on a par with the Doctor, Jo Grant had bravery and compassion, Sarah Jane had intuition and investigative prowess. Leela was a far more physical companion, and one shorn of the reluctance to spare a life in combat, which immediately results in conflict with the Doctor. Having said that, the Time Lord will go on to see beyond the savage nature of Leela and realise her potential

and worth. Just as the producer had intended.

'The Face of Evil' was the fourth serial in season 14 of Doctor Who. It was written by new writer Chris Boucher, who was commissioned for the programme by script editor Robert Holmes. Boucher explains the genesis of 'The Face of Evil', which was not the story's original title:

"I submitted a sample script and the plot of the next three episodes, which landed on the desk of Robert Holmes. Bob liked the style in which they were written but not the story, so he sent me away to work on a draft of a new idea which became 'The Face of Evil'. That went through about three rewrites until they were finally satisfied. I started with an idea about a computer – an idea derived from a book by Harry Harrison, called *Captive Universe*. The book isn't actually about the computer, but about a place which the inhabitants think is a world but which is actually a spaceship. In my script, I took that a stage further by saying that my spaceship had in fact landed and that the source of all the trouble was the computer of the ship, which had gone berserk on landing. The computer then manifests its own personality on the planet, which, I figure if there is a God, is exactly what He has done. Hence the original title of the story, 'The Day God Went Mad', which wasn't that good a title anyway. The new title came from Robert Holmes."

At this point, Leela was never intended to be a full time companion, but a one-off character with whom the Doctor would interact. Boucher was led by Holmes and producer Philip Hinchcliffe. “At the time I was commissioned, they were between companions and they hadn’t decided what they were going to do about new companions, how many, or what sex they would be.” Boucher states. “I was told that obviously, my script would need a companion figure – someone for the Doctor to talk and explain things to. Now Bob was very tired of the screaming, helpless girls, so I was told whatever I did write, not to write that. The natural antidote came after I had gone away and thought about it, and that antidote became the character of Leela.”

The name Leela was inspired by a real life person, Leila Khaled, a Palestinian refugee, former militant and member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In 1969 Khaled became the first woman to hijack an aircraft. Boucher explains: “She was from a time when plane hijacking was still considered to be an almost idealistic, brave and noble thing to do. She was jailed for

her beliefs and no one had been killed, she was glamorous, she was articulate, but she also became the precursor of some rather less appealing people and happenings.”

With the story written, the decision to have Leela as a one time companion was abandoned and the production team decided to make her a full time TARDIS passenger. Thus, the task to find an actress for the role of Leela began. Twenty six actresses would audition for the part, which was eventually given to Louise Jameson.

Born in Essex in 1951, Jameson attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and spent two years with the Royal Shakespeare Company, before landing her first regular television role of Mary Arnold in Tom Brown’s Schooldays in 1971. In 1973 she had the dubious honour of becoming the first character murdered in Emmerdale Farm, playing Sharon Crossthwaite. Louise would return to the soap 49 years later, playing the part of Mary Gaskirk.

Director Pennant Roberts cast Jameson as Leela. She would go on to have a strong friendship with Roberts, and their relationship began with him standing in for Tom at her first read-through: “I made him work.” she quipped.

The idea of Leela being taught to be civilised by the Doctor, was influenced by the characters in George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion, as Producer Philip Hinchcliffe confirms: “What was in my mind was the idea of a new companion from a psychological and emotional point



of view. The relationship would be a bit like an Eliza Doolittle to professor Higgins. So there was this idea of an uncivilised, uncultured assistant and the Doctor would smooth her manners."

It was left to gifted actress Louise Jameson to embellish the character of Leela beyond the words in the script, and she had a couple of early inspirations: "There was a little girl who lived upstairs, and she was three years old. She was this little feisty, intelligent, inquiring, interesting, energetic girl and I thought there was some body language there I can use."

It wasn't just human characteristics Louise swiped for Leela. "I had a dog at the time, incredibly curious, and he used to do this thing with his head," (Louise performs a cocking movement.) "every now and then, and I thought there's some body language I can steal as well. So it was an amalgamation of the script, the director's input and these two sources of inspiration."

With actress in place, it was down to costume designer John Bloomfield to create the look for Leela. Unlike former female companions, the new TARDIS passenger would be wearing significantly less clothing. As Bloomfield explained to Toby Hadoke as part of Hadoke's Who's Round podcast, the costume was not simply gratuitous to please the dads watching: "It's all a question of trial and error, how much can I show and is it also reflecting the story that has been written? You can't just go and say give her a sexy bikini, it's got to work for the story."

Having discussed the costume with Louise, the actress told John it had to

have a small amendment: "Like all of us, we have quirks with those parts of us that we're not that fond of, and my huge arse was one of them, so I insisted on this little flap at the back."

It is well known Tom Baker was saddened by the departure of Liz Sladen, and was not receptive to the idea of an immediate replacement, leading to a somewhat awkward working relationship with Louise, as she testifies: "On the first day, Tom and I rather danced around each other, and I found out later he didn't want a companion at all, he preferred to travel on his own. It's no secret that Tom and I didn't have the best working relationship, that said, I would like to say I think he was a completely brilliant Doctor, and he cared desperately about the programme."

The onscreen chemistry between the Doctor and Leela mirrored the actor's somewhat frosty relationship, with the Time Lord's disapproval of the warrior's bloodthirsty approach. For a character who uses nothing more dangerous than a bag of sweets to combat an adversary, the use of Janis thorns and knives are as big as an anathema to him as guns. Indeed, Baker refused to film a scene where the Doctor threatens one of the tribesmen with a knife, and substituted the weapon for a "deadly" jelly baby, much to Hinchcliffe's annoyance. The relationship between the Doctor and Leela softens and strengthens when he saves her life from Janis thorn toxin, and it is obvious he immediately feels protective of Leela when he kicks a Horda onto a tribesman in retaliation for him slapping her.

'The Face of Evil', already exciting enough with the arrival of a new com-

panion, draws you in with the concept of the Doctor being an “evil one” and him having the voice of the planet’s ‘God’. The Doctor quickly works out the tribe of Sevateem have been visited in the past by space travellers and their captive God, Xoanon is related to them in some way. Leela leads the Doctor to a mountain, and they discover his face carved into it. As exciting as this revelation is, the plot is a bit all over the place for a ten year old to grasp. To be honest, fifty five year old me is similarly struggling to make sense of it, but the indignation on the Doctor’s face when Leela suggests they enter the time barrier through the carving’s nose is hilarious. Then there is the joy of the Doctor using the word ‘flapdoodle’, which I assumed was a Tom Baker ad lib, with the intention of children transferring it to playgrounds, but it was actually in the original script. Flapdoodle was first recorded in 1834 and was famously used in print in 1884, in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Anyway, back to the story, after the tribesmen run around fighting budget saving invisible monsters, the Doctor and Leela enter the spaceship and he deduces the ‘Sevateem’ are actually descendants of the ship’s ‘survey team’, who explored the planet, while the Tesh were the craft’s technicians and stayed behind on the colony ship. After the Doctor meets the psychic Tesh he realises the separation of the colony is an exercise in eugenics. That is a pretty heady concept for children to understand, but not that far removed from the programme’s biggest baddies the Dalek’s fascistic beliefs of racial improvement and superiority. It transpires the Doctor’s previous visit to the planet involved him repairing the

stranded ship’s computer Xoanon with his own brain, but he forgot to wipe his personality print from the data core, leaving the now sentient computer with a split personality.

The Doctor engages Xoanon, trying to explain its origins, and the machine goes mad. It is a tantalising supposition that the three voices of Xoanon may belong to forgotten incarnations of the Doctor, drawn from the Time Lord’s subconscious. If that is the case, then it could be argued that actors Rob Edwards, Pamela Salem and lucky schoolboy Anthony Frieze could be counted as people who have played the role of the Doctor. But let us veer away from that ‘Timeless Children’ can of worms. Xoanon sets the ship’s atomic generators to overload. As the Doctor races to wipe his personality print from Xoanon, the machine unites the Sevateem and Tesh in a vain attempt to stop him. After successfully removing himself from the computer, the Doctor has a two day nap, and has a much calmer conversation with the now sane Xoanon. The Doctor leaves the Sevateem and Tesh to bicker with each other and, as he is about to depart, Leela asks to go with him. He refuses but she runs into the TARDIS and somehow knows exactly where the dematerialising circuit is. I can’t help but think Tom is say-



ing “out!” with a bit too much conviction.

As an introduction to a companion, ‘The Face of Evil’ is certainly more inventive and imaginative than the Doctor simply picking up his next assistant on Earth. Austin Ruddy’s beautifully designed jungle, and Tesh spaceship, built at Ealing Studios, along with Matt Irvine’s collapsing alarm clock and plaster cast Tom Baker face brilliantly colour Leela’s introductory story. The Fourth Doctor’s relationship with Leela may not have started amicably, with her forcing herself into the companion role, but Louise Jameson certainly made the warrior of the Sevateem into one of the most fondly remembered Doctor Who characters. Louise puts the initial success of Leela down to the serial’s director: “I had been so tenderly rehearsed by Pennant that he gave me such a very good foundation stone for the character. Had there been a slightly different director I don’t think I would have come up with as good a character as I did.”

Pennant Roberts may have laid the foundations of Leela, but it was Louise Jameson’s interpretation of the character that made her a much loved friend of not only the Doctor, but of a whole generation of children who looked forward to seeing her travelling with the Time Lord every Saturday. She expertly blends Leela’s childlike naïveté of the universe, and her eagerness to learn with her overt surface physicality. It is a beautiful piece of acting.

I was unaware of the friction between Tom and Louise when I first watched ‘The Face of Evil’, I just remember being shocked at how different the new companion was, and immediately enjoying the feisty dynamic between the Doctor and his new friend. Well, I say friend: this fledgling, uncertain relationship would thaw, both on and off screen. For now, I was happy the Doctor had company in the TARDIS again. I really did not like those shouty men in the silly robes and funny collars.

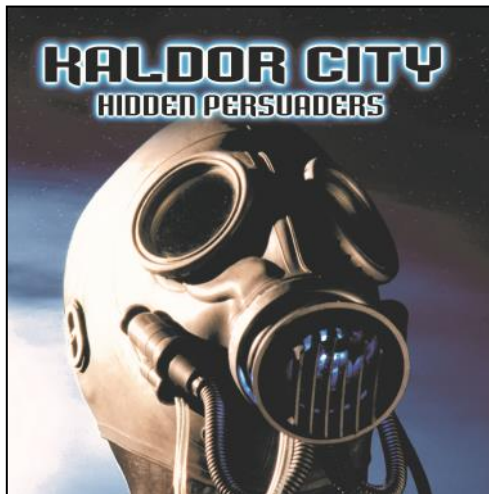


THE ROBOTS OF DEATH

Review by Fiona Moore

No matter the Doctor Who tale currently in fashion, people still come back to 'The Robots of Death' as a favourite re-watch. It's not always rated as number one, but it features consistently in their top ten.

I, myself, strongly appreciate all aspects of this adventure, which is why I wrote a monograph in 2020 for The Black Archive on the social and cinematic zeitgeist that influenced its creation, as well as contributing to the development of the Kaldor City spin-off audio dramas for Magic Bullet Productions.



The story has a lot in common with the 'Base-Under-Siege' genre of Doctor Who, and in particular the Patrick Troughton serial 'The Moonbase'. Both feature a multiethnic crew in an isolated location, robotic creatures picking people off one by one and the Doctor having to solve a mystery to clear his own name. Yet 'The Robots of Death' is re-

garded by most as a genuine classic, whilst 'The Moonbase' is usually considered merely enjoyable hokum.



To the viewer, the most obvious explanation lies in the styling of the piece. Rather cleverly, the design eschewed its audience's expectations of how the future should look, instead taking its inspiration from the past — in this instance the Art Deco period. Indeed, the beautifully sculptured humanoid features of the robots make them far more intimidating as killers than if they had resembled the Quarks from 'The Dominators' or Robbie of *Forbidden Planet* (1956), whilst the humans, with their elaborate hats and effete makeup, are given an unreal formality, belying the



viciousness under the surface.

The designers also picked up on the tale's subtle referencing of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) in the Storm Mine interior, contrasting the soft, organic leisure environment of the crew quarters, with the spare, industrial setting of the Control Deck. Equally, the costumes allude to Lang's embattled elite, whilst their mechanical servants recall Lang's insane 'Maria' robot.



Much of the credit must go to the director Michael E. Briant, who worked closely with designer Kenneth Sharp, costume designer Elizabeth Waller, and make-up artist Ann Briggs to create this stunning aesthetic. However, there is more to tell. David Collings plays Poul, the vulnerable detective who falls prey to robophobia, in a manner reminiscent of Gustav Fröhlich as Freder, from *Metropolis* — a man driven spectacularly mad when confronted with the 'Maria' robot's crimes. The sequences in Toos'

cabin also bear a disturbing resemblance to film-noir rape/murder scenes, and the repeated shots of robots at work add to the sense of menace.



Both 'The Robots of Death' and 'The Moonbase' herald a multicultural future by employing an ethnically diverse set of characters, although in the latter, the self-consciousness of the exercise reduces the crew of the eponymous base to nothing more than a collection of stereotypes: a Frenchman who prances about in a neck scarf, an easygoing Black American, an aloof Scandinavian, a no-nonsense Englishman. And there's not a woman in sight. By contrast, there is nothing in Chris Boucher's story to suggest Cass should be Asian, Zilda Black, or Toos female, while Brian Croucher, who would most likely have been doomed to play a cheeky Cockney had he appeared in 'The Moonbase', is cast against type as a dangerous aristocratic fop. Add in the director's decision to include a variety of ethnic groups and accents — meaning, for the most part, the cast is made up of talented unknowns — and the suspense is greatly increased because our expectations of the characters' motivations are either confounded or non-existent.

Boucher's superbly crafted script is an-



other element setting it off from its closest cousin. Inherently, its narrative, as with 'The Moonbase', requires periodic info-dumps: Boucher however, incorporates these adroitly into character development. In an early scene, Dask delivers a key plot point about the way the robots are programmed but this jointly serves to mark him as the sort of tedious pedant who would ruin a good joke by detailing its implausibilities. Uvanov's hair-trigger paranoid rants are also perfect vehicles to explain important aspects of the Storm Mine and of the society from which it springs.

The crew is depicted bickering and backbiting (something familiar to anyone who has worked in an isolated small group, and yet oddly lacking in 'The Moonbase') while the slang deployed is close enough to our own to seem natural, and yet different enough to give a surreal impression. Similarly, the cast makes casual references to the planet's history and culture — Kaldor City, robot masseurs, Founding Families — rattling these and specific technical terms off until they come across as ordinary and familiar, without boring viewers with unnecessary expositions or technobabble.

As well as callbacks to *Metropolis* (mad genius uses a beautiful robot to foment rebellion against the denominative

city's upper class) the plot is also reminiscent of the original robot story, the 1920 play R.U.R. (female protagonist initiates a robot rebellion through a humanitarian effort to give them souls). Further influences are present, with Boucher explicitly alluding to Asimov's *The Caves of Steel* and his robot novel cycle.

Of course, this is nothing new: virtually all Doctor Who adventures can be said to have drawn upon earlier literary and cinematic works. Even so, it is the way these references are combined and explored to create a unique riff on the idea of a robot uprising that makes this serial stand out. 'The Robots of Death' is neither *The Caves of Steel*, *Metropolis*, or R.U.R., but something which builds upon them all. In contrast to its progenitors, it has striking elements of the psychological novel in its characterisation and storytelling.

This attention to cognitive detail is noticeable. Whereas 'The Moonbase' focuses less on traumatic stress reactions than cool science fiction concepts such as weather regulating stations or scary monsters, 'Robots', by contrast, draws its main strength from the portraits of a crew under fire, in particular the characters of Uvanov, Poul and Taren Capel.



Skilfully portrayed by Russell Hunter, Uvanov is an engaging character. For all his irascibility, it is his bewilderment and paranoia that allows him to interpret ongoing events to the viewer. His class-based insecurity is apparent from his very first scene with Zilda and, later on, drives him to pin the murder on the Doctor and Leela rather than investigate further and risk losing his hold over the crew. However, we find it difficult to blame him, because his impulse is very relatable: how many of us, after all, would react any better under the same circumstances?

At the start of the serial, we see Uvanov losing a game of chess to one of the very robots shortly to go on a murdering spree — demonstrating a lack of logic and strategy that will nearly cost him his life. Once pointed in the right direction, however, this flaw becomes a strength as Uvanov discovers his inner anarchist as he goes on the offensive.

Poul, in many ways, exemplifies a social condition often reflected in the works of Agatha Christie (to which 'Robots' is frequently compared) where household servants formed a symbolic fifth column. Hired as subordinates, they nevertheless, acquire an intimate knowledge of their employers' vulnerabilities, resulting in Christie's numerous cast of murdering butlers and housemaids. This irony initiates the true horror for both the crew of Storm Mine Four and Christie's readers — that the menace comes from within.

Robophobia, we're informed, is a pathological fear of robots induced by their lack of body language. Poul describes them as "walking dead" and Leela designates them "creepy mechanical men"



making it clear the panic is caused by the automatons looking human but not responding as such.

The scene where Poul and the Doctor reenact Chub's death is noteworthy because, while Poul takes the presence of robots for granted, on another level, the possibility of a robot running amok has evidently crossed his mind. He is not unintelligent; he has seen the wounds inflicted upon the earlier victims; but his quick denial of the Doctor's suggestion a robot could be the murderer implies he's not so much dismissing the idea as denying it as a possibility he fears. More than any other character, Poul represents the social paralysis which would result from a robot revolution.

In this respect, it is somewhat ironic that the only machine on Storm Mime Four capable of rebellion is Poul's undercover accomplice, the robot detective D84. Described in Boucher's sequel novel as "an experimental model". D84 appears to develop empathic, emotional, and indeed imaginative qualities during its pedagogical relationship with the Doctor. In contrast, its fellow robots are simply tools which have been reprogrammed by an outside agency to turn on the human crew.



Of all the characters in the story, Taren Capel (chillingly brought to life by David Baillie) is the most complex. By rights, some of the mystery should be ruined because sharp-eyed trouser-spotters can identify the murderer during Part Two. In actuality, it doesn't matter if we realise Dask is responsible, for his motives remain to be discovered, and this slow unfolding of the multiple facets of his character drives the main thrust of the narrative.

The Doctor's aside to the camera, describing Capel as a "very mad scientist", reveals the kernel of the villain's mindset, and yet Capel is much more than Doctor Frankenstein, or even Fritz Lang's deranged scientist Rotwang, who by his own admission is motivated by jealousy and unrequited love.

In fact, Capel's actions contradict his spoken ethos: although he idealises the calm and discipline of robots, he is visibly a sadist, taking pleasure in the psychological manipulation of his crewmates and the physical torture of the Doctor. Sadism, as a mental condition, is linked to a fear of losing control and a need to dominate people, so Capel's fascination probably stems from a desire to be in charge. Robots, unlike people, will do his bidding.

However, there are additional elements to Capel bearing exploration.

The scientist has a confused identity, manifesting as three separate personae (the Latin word *persona*, significantly, means "a mask"). The first, a consciously manufactured self, is "Dask", calm, composed, and rather pedantic; the second, the person who Capel thinks of as his true self, an idealised human machine who adopts robotic speech cadences and costume. Yet beneath these exteriors lies his true nature, a raging psychopath.

Interestingly, the Doctor calls Capel "Dask" during their final scenes, telling him "You look ridiculous in that outfit. Not half the robot your father was." He is exposing Capel's personae as masks; painting his face still leaves his essence unchanged. "Dask's" reply to this is a fit of snarling fury. His death ultimately comes through a loss of identity – by having his voice distorted by helium gas, Capel is stripped of the very trait which enables the robots to distinguish him.



The reason for Capel's insanity, however, can be found in the parallels drawn throughout the script between himself and Poul.

Capel and Poul (whose names are derived from science-fiction writers Karel Čapek and Poul Anderson) are outsiders in disguise, their true 'identities' tied up with a secret held by one or more of the robots on the Mine. Visually, Capel's death mimics Poul's descent into neurosis an episode earlier as he too falls to his knees before a robot, in screaming, senseless dread.

There is a parallel, too, between Poul's instant refusal to accept a robot could be responsible for Chub's death and Capel's quick denial of their dependency on humans for their existence. The two characters have more in common than simple madness.

As with Poul, Capel's mental instability is not innate, but imposed from the outside.

When Leela finds him hiding in the robot morgue, Poul, in panicked delirium, attempts to betray her to the robots, convinced accepting her help will cause the robots to view him as an enemy. He further assumes he will be immune from attack if he keeps still and hidden. Similarly, Capel's behaviour can be seen as an attempt to ingratiate himself with the robots; he dresses like a robot, repeatedly calls them "my brothers" and offers assistance they do not request. At the end of the story, as a robot's hands close to his throat, he cries out, not "I am your brother," but "I am your master", again implying a terrified attempt to assert control over an unstoppable force.

His murder at the hands of a robot parroting the phrase "Kill the humans" must be for Capel the most frightening and humiliating death imaginable.

One of the few background details we know about Capel is he was raised by robots. For most people, images of strength and control are taken from our early experiences of those who brought us up. By drawing parallels between Poul and his quarry, Boucher has hidden the explanation for Capel's mental breakdown in plain sight.

It is Capel's robophobia, not his megalomania, which triggers the unfolding of events on Storm Mine Four, although the second is symptomatic of the first.

In sum, 'The Robots of Death' stands far ahead of its closest relatives because its design and direction combine with clever scripting and sharp insight into character, elevating it above the level of 'The Moonbase' and placing it on a parallel with the SF classic novels and films it references.

However, the most compelling theme is the one concealed within the character of Taren Capel: the deaths are not instigated by the robots themselves, but by the complexities that spring from human nature.



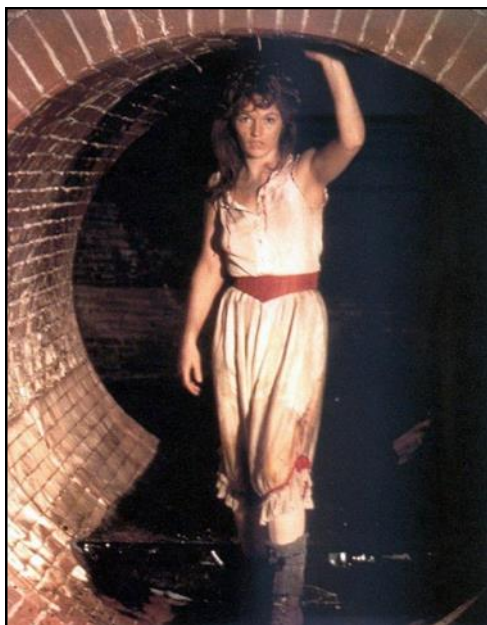
THE TALONS OF WENG CHIANG

Review by Paul Winter

When a show like Doctor Who has run for so long it is difficult to pick a single favourite story. Nonetheless, if I were forced to, it would be 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang'. Now permit me a brief name-drop moment. Once, I was having dinner with Barry Letts and Terrance Dicks (oh yes, I was! The Holiday Inn in Ipswich in fact during a DWAS event). During this I happened to mention that this was my favourite, and Terrance Dicks remarked that it was because "it has a bit of everything". And it does. It is a thoroughly believable Victorian period setting, it has some wonderful characters including the eponymous Jago and Litefoot (who only actually meet up towards the end), Leela is written exceptionally well (as the scene when she is dining with Litefoot demonstrates), it has a well-crafted plot involving time travel and a bit of British imperialism thrown in, some great direction from David Maloney including real night shooting and a highly dubious giant rat. In fact, is there anything bad about it?

Well, yes. There is something that was not discussed by fandom for many years, and that is the allegation of racism in the story. Thinking back to when first broadcast I find I have no memory of these concerns being raised in the UK (although there were problems with the Canadian broadcast as I recall). People will say that this is because attitudes were different in the 1970s. And they were. It was still common for actors to 'black up' back then and in 'The Talons of Weng Chiang' we have John Bennett

as Li H'sen Chang doing just this to play a Chinese man. Was that racist? You certainly would not do it today, and I cannot in all honesty argue against the allegation. That does not mean that the character as presented to us is a caricature or stereotype. Quite the contrary in fact. Li H'sen Chang is a complex individual and in an early scene he actually highlights the prejudice that Chinese immigrants would have faced at the time, when, whilst attending the police station as an interpreter, he remarks to the Doctor that "I understand we all look the same?" However it is also true that other actors of true ethnic origin (as opposed to white actors in make-up) are in the show but restricted to secondary and subservient roles, cowering at the feet of Magnus Greel. And they are all bad guys.



Despite all this I am reluctant to assert that the overall portrayal of the Chinese in the story is entirely negative. There have always been organised crime groups within society and many of these were based on racial or religious lines. During prohibition in the USA during the 1920s and early 1930s much of this criminality was based on an Italian-Catholic tradition, for example, and there are many similar examples in more recent times too. Chang is presented as a highly intelligent and articulate individual, and Litefoot, who spent many of his formative years in China, holds that society with a high degree of respect too. None of this however can compensate for John Bennett playing a Chinese man with his face caked in make-up. (Ironically, I did not realise this until I saw the story on DVD. Maybe I was just not paying attention before, but it is hard to miss when you see the programme in HD).

I am still going to enjoy this story as a great example of both Doctor Who itself and the Hinchcliffe/Holmes era in particular though. It is probably the best

use of Leela as a companion in the programme and one of the last times we see her presented to us as a true 'Eliza Doolittle' type of figure. Louise Jameson really does excel. Michael Spice rants and raves as Magnus Greel from behind that mask and the backstory of a future conflict, with Greel being hunted as a war criminal is established well enough for the viewer to believe it happened with the overall context of the story. And we have Deep Roy giving us a monstrous 'Peking Homunculus' – a cybernetic creature with such a deep hatred of mankind (despite being created by mankind itself) that at the end it cannot resist opening fire on Greel's servants for the pure fun of it.

So, like the many Disney films we look at today with fresh eyes, I am going to accept that some aspects of the making of 'The Talons of Weng Chiang' are unfortunate or just plain wrong, but that nonetheless, when viewed in the context of the time in which it was made, it is still a story I can watch and enjoy. This may not excuse the racism but it does at least explain it.



EXPLORATION EARTH

Review by Joseph Chambers

Having been made by BBC Radio Four with the intention of being an educational resource made to teach school children about the science behind Earth's beginnings, this cannot really be judged as a standard Doctor Who audio-drama as such. Whilst it is true that it pales in comparison to the modern-day dramas of Big Finish, it would be remiss to look at it that way. In fact, if anything, this could almost be looked at as a kind of prototype experiment to see if Doctor Who could work on audio, which of course we now know it can, indeed for some Doctors the audio medium has proven to work better than better than television did (see Colin Baker and Paul McGann). So instead, to critique this properly, we must ask, does it do the job of educating the young about the creation of Earth effectively and entertainingly, whilst staying true to the source material. And the answer is...no? Well, not quite anyway, though it is really trying quite hard, and I can appreciate the effort of most of it.

For me, 'Exploration Earth' is an interesting bit of history to be sure (and it is fun to hear an audio where Tom Baker and Elizabeth Sladen are actually the right age for the programme and not just pretending to be) but unfortunately, whilst it does succeed in a few areas it fails in rather too many others to be truly recommendable to anyone beyond the most die-hard fan of Doctor Who. Let me explain a bit more as to why I think this.

Whilst I cannot criticize the performance of Elizabeth Sladen as Sarah-Jane, who I do not think was able to turn in a bad record if she tried, even if the writing in this case makes her a little more moany than usual; and the same can be said for John Westbrook as Megron, who seems to take joy in hamming it up as the main 'villain' and is certainly taking more care with his performance of the character than was given to him with the script; Tom Baker's acting here is more akin to reading the script, deciding he did not like it enough to give 10/10 and only giving the needed 5/10 just to get paid. The sound design itself is also very up and down (and I do not mean just in volume, but yes, some bits are a little too quiet to actually make out what people are saying). No, sometimes the sounds are very atmospheric, rather nostalgic but lovably 70s in style, and sometimes the noises are so loud, so repetitive and so constant that it requires a prescription of Paracetamol afterwards to make the migraine go away. However, to give them their fair dues, they do use the correct theme tune and the right TARDIS sounds, and it does sound like Doctor Who should for the most part.

The writing (by Bernard Venables) is all over the map. Whilst the Doctor and Sarah-Jane are on point character wise (although Sarah saying "loster and loster" instead of "more and more lost" might go against the good grasp of the English language that she should be

assumed to have as a published journalist). The creation of Earth element seems scientifically accurate, as far as I can tell, although Sarah does claim the noise is giving her earache, in the silence of the vacuum of space, something which would have been difficult to get across on audio, without the whole thing feeling very anti-climactic to someone who does not understand the science of the situation. The dialogue can even be eloquent at times ("yawning wounds of fire"), while at other times seeming like garbled nonsense, that would probably have completely lost any of the children who listened at the time. Indeed, I had to listen to the production five times, just to make sure I got everything, and I am still not sure I have. The writing also seems to labour the point sometimes a bit too much, such as this 'glorious' moment when the Doctor and Sarah discuss how much the Earth's size has changed between their periodic time jumps in the story:

Sarah: It's smaller.

Doctor: Yes, your Earth's progressing. That huge fiery mass is much smaller now isn't it.

Sarah: It's much smaller.

Doctor: Do you know what, I get the feeling it is smaller now.

In fact, the writing is so messy that I came away from it questioning who the villain was. It was clearly meant to be Megron, but as far as I could tell he was harmlessly preaching nonsense that would have been disproven in time without the Doctor having ever been there. He never actually impedes Earth's progress and doesn't do any harm to the Doctor and Sarah. The Doctor could have just left him be and

nothing would have changed. Instead, he chooses to make fun of his beliefs, and also ignores Sarah's discomfort with everything. This left me wondering, not only whether the Doctor did any good this time round, but also whether his actions were negative; and whilst there is nothing wrong with the Doctor sometimes doing bad things, or his actions leading to bad things, I doubt that this was the intention of the piece, and nothing ever comes of it, or is made of it. The Doctor might have been the true villain here, or at least he was not very nice to everyone, and nothing is done about it. It's not even addressed. Even towards the very end of the story, it is the Doctor who states that Megron and he must fight mentally without even giving him a warning, a chance to back down or even an opportunity to leave peacefully. Megron is without a doubt, delusional, but the Doctor should have done more to help him come to terms with his faulty beliefs, rather than just make fun of him and then defeat and banish him when there should have been another way.

Another glaring issue for me is that this appears to have 'bent' Doctor Who to fit the brief rather than fitting the brief to Doctor Who. Whilst it cannot really be helped that this contradicts later Doctor Who stories (The Runaway Bride being the obvious example), even by the standards of this era, one is left asking a lot of questions. When did the TARDIS get a capsule? Why does it need one if it has a built in forcefield? Why does Megron claim Time Lords "interfere" all the time when both the Second and Sixth Doctor got put on trial for going against the laws of the Time Lords by doing just that? Most importantly, Sarah Jane is clearly upset

so why can't the Doctor just leave and come back to see all this later, when he is alone or with someone more appreciative?

Actually, can he leave? It's implied that the TARDIS is off course, but it is never stated if this is the work of Megron or an effect of the Earth forming or something else entirely. Do you see how frustrating this is? I have so many questions that spoil the enjoyment of this story, which I can only imagine would have been doubled for any children who were listening at the time.

When The Doctor and Sarah Jane are interacting, it feels like real Doctor Who; but the lengthy explanations of events, mixed with sound effects that are no better than OK, makes something as important as the birth of my own planet seem boring. Even the so called villain can't save this piece as his only contribution to the story seems to be to call out the Doctor for speaking the truth and to preach about generic "chaos!".

Since I am not a child of the 1970s (I was born in the year 2000), I will give this production the benefit of the doubt and

say that it is merely a product of its time. I will even credit it for being rather clever in some of its dialogue. At one point, the Doctor says, "If you want to ask a question, please put your hand up", something which would have been relatable to the listening school children. But the script needed more polish in pretty much every department, for me to have come away from it saying I had anything close to a good time with it.

This is an interesting piece of Doctor Who history, don't get me wrong, but I am also kind of glad that the CD came with an edited-down, audio version of 'Genesis of the Daleks', otherwise I would rather have spent my money elsewhere.



THE PESCATONS

Review by Edward Brady

At the foot of the Pharos Project telescope, we watched and held our breath along with his three companions to the closing moments of 'Logopolis' on 21st March 1981. Having finally bowed out in the magnificent season eighteen run of stories, Tom Baker gracefully handed over his beloved role after seven magnificent years and it seemed that this was the last we may see of him. However, it was to be only two and a half years later that we were to see the fourth Doctor in action once more albeit briefly in the un-transmitted material that had been utilised from 'Shada' and inserted into the narrative of 'The Five Doctors' special in 1983. A masterstroke decision to make up for Baker's and the fourth Doctor's absence from newly filmed material. A Tussauds waxwork would not cut it in the actual 90 minute programme! Again, many believed that we were never going to see or meet the Doctor Who star in this country again after this point; unless you had been brave enough to survive the queues at the Longleat Celebration earlier in the year. After the show's cancellation in 1989, his fellow Doctors were busy making themselves available at numerous signing and convention events throughout the UK; but for many years Tom Baker was rarely seen. This changed on the evening of Saturday 4th September 1993 at the 'Thirty Years of a Timelord' event held at the Novotel in Hammersmith, London. Whilst there, I witnessed something special; as Tom Baker arrived on stage and entertained a large crowd for an hour or so. He was clearly moved by the reception that he

received from this audience and particularly so when he was reunited with his original co-star Elisabeth Sladen during the final few minutes. Surprisingly still, and rumours were even heard at this event, that Baker had somehow been encouraged to appear once more for the charity multi Doctor episodes of 'Dimensions in Time' that coming November. Further appearances came and three years on from this, I was lining up to meet Tom in person at Longleat House again at an event held on Sunday 18th August 1996; where his friend Nicholas Courtney was also in attendance at the Orangery signing table. Later, it had been announced that Tom had written his autobiography 'Who on Earth is Tom Baker?'. I joined another queue on Saturday 4th October 1997 in London's Oxford Street outside the Dillons book store; where jelly babies were offered to the patient fans and Tom was happy to sign additional items that were brought along on the day. I caught up with him on the same promotional tour a second time at the Cambridge branch of Dillons; where I purchased the audio cassette reading of his autobiography with further more of my VHS sleeves and postcards under my arm that would be signed by Tom. It could clearly be seen on these rare appearances that he was enjoying the moment and reacquainting himself with his loyal fans once more. And, at these events he was able to see at first hand and up close the response. Tom Baker did finally return and get to play the Doctor once more in the three 'Nest Cottage' audio drama series that were produced by the BBC

from 2009 and he eventually found additional happiness at Big Finish in their stories. Sadly, Tom was unable to perform again alongside Elisabeth Sladen and we were never able to hear them together in newly performed Doctor Who stories. Luckily, they both had actually recorded an audio story together quite a few years before...

For some time it had totally passed me by that there had been a two-part audio adventure featuring the fourth Doctor and Sarah-Jane, that had taken place between 'The Seeds of Doom'; that was the closing story of season Thirteen and 'The Masque of Mandragora' adventure which opened season Fourteen. When I was first made aware of its existence sometime in the late eighties, I discovered that the record had sadly long since been deleted. I did try asking my local Library to obtain it for me to borrow out or get it on loan from another nearby Library; but they were unable to do so. When the title was initially issued on Decca's Argo label in July 1976, the story would have been quite a unique event for fans at the time. A Doctor Who story that was pressed on to a twelve inch vinyl record, made available to purchase over the counter in your local record store for you to take home and enjoy it at anytime that you wished to listen to it. A must buy, like the novelisations in then expand-

ing Target book library that were being periodically published and were so well loved from this era. But, unlike those treasured books that sat proudly in television broadcast order on your bedroom shelf; this was an adventure that you could actually hear the Doctor and Sarah speak and get drawn into the tale that was taking place on the disc. This story would have been a much more personal experience without the need for any television pictures that would normally have been a shared one and taken place in the family sitting room on a given Saturday teatime. 'The Pescatons' LP was written by Victor Pemberton who had scripted 'Fury from the Deep' for Patrick Troughton's Doctor for Season five. He had also held the position of story editor during the production of another Troughton favourite - 'Tomb of the Cybermen' that had aired prior to 'Fury' from the same season; during the show's



affectionately labelled 'monster years' period in 1967. As mentioned in the sleeve notes for Silva Screen's reissue of the album in 1991, both Victor Pemberton and the albums producer Don Norman had spoken to each other at the time about their shared conservational interests. Having got Tom Baker interested in recording a one off Doctor Who audio adventure, plans then progressed and a story idea that involved a menace lurking in the sea that came from a far off planet was proposed and agreed on by the BBC. Recording sessions then took place thereafter. The two episode Doctor Who long player was recorded at three studios before final mixing began. These sessions had taken place at Argo's own studios for the actors to perform their lines within London and where directed by Harley Usill and engineered by Kevin Daly. The background soundscape that included a musical score by Kenny Clayton & sound effects were engineered by Robert Parker and Brian Hodgson and were taped at Molinaire and Electrophon Studios; which were also located in the capital. A small cast had been assembled of just three actors that included Tom Baker, Elisabeth Sladen and Bill Mitchell to play the alien leader Zor. A great illustration by Laurie Richards appeared on the original Argo LP front sleeve which was later to be given a 1990's reimagining. This update was worked on by Pete Wallbank; and his painting became the new sleeve image on the 1991 CD reissue and the new Target book. Although I am a great collector of vinyl records myself, it is the Silva Screen CD version that I have in my collection. The novelisation itself, also written by Pemberton was based around and expanded upon the record's original story idea and was published in the same year. The book does well to further build upon the audio story and

there are many additional scenes that take place between the structured beats of the original adventure as presented on the vinyl. Two portrait photographs showing a relaxed Tom and Elisabeth taken by Suzette Gibbs appeared on the reverse of the LP record sleeve and were later reproduced for the CD liner notes. Both actors prior to the release of 'The Pescatons' LP had recorded together during the April of 1976 a 20 minute short episode entitled 'Exploration Earth: The Time Machine' that would later be broadcast in the October on BBC Radio. Also of interest to DWAS historians and certainly a sign of the times of merchandise from this period was that the inner CD sleeve also reveals an advertisement for the DWAS and Celestial Toyroom.

Listening back forty seven years on from its original release, 'Pescatons' is more a curiosity and nostalgia piece than a fully fleshed out adventure that we would come to expect today. But in fairness to the producers at the time it was never intended to be and with due credit to them it was cleverly realised to fit the intended running time of a standard 33rpm record duration. Each side of the vinyl contained one full episode and both made up 46 minutes of programme content. The drama of the adventure unfolds with gripping atmosphere helped in part by Kenny Clayton's score which is very like Dudley Simpson's radiophonic experimental period from the early seventies and sits well when it is used here. The tale is told in the most part in the first person perspective by the fourth Doctor and Tom Baker's distinctive vocal narration is heard to full effect on this release. Amusingly, the fourth Doctor during one scene is heard playing a Piccolo to distract the alien; that perhaps is something that we would

imagine Troughton's second Doctor to do and Victor Pemberton may have been channelling his memory of what he thought the Doctor would respond to in a situation like this. Elsewhere he is heard singing the lyrics to 'Hello Dolly' where in the television programme Tom would most certainly have whistled the bars of something along the lines of the 'Colonel Bogey' march. That said, it comes across in his performance that Tom is enjoying these brief uncharacteristic moments. Unusually in this story, the TARDIS is heard arriving and departing somewhat differently to her usual television Vworp Vworp ripping through the fabrics of time sound. It is also interesting that Pemberton uses the sea as a place of expansive dark menace as he did in his previous script for 'Fury from the Deep' and like his earlier sixties story, the alien though imagined here differently in the listeners own imaginations is this time despatched in a similar way; by the use of sound waves to make the alien threat retreat. Having enjoyed listening to this record again in the summer of 2023, I remembered that while the drama has plenty of atmospheric stillness during for instance the initial arrival of the TARDIS on the isolated beach in the first episode, the approaching heartbeat and loud roar of the Pescaton fugitive when it is first heard catches you off guard; as I am sure was the producers intentions. The cliff-hanger to part one has a similar feel to the 'War of the Worlds' story in the depiction of an alien invasion and both tales also share a similar threat of a creeping alien weed. The story although not too detailed in plot, moves along at a good pace and you have to be paying attention to the scenes that jump to and from the previous visit that the companion-less Doctor made to the planet Pesca in his past and the scenes that are taking place on Earth in the present

tense. The Pescaton planet had grown too close to it's sun. The knock on effect was that it was causing the rapid evaporation of all of it vast ocean surface; with the planets species on a desperate hunt for suitable planet to settle on. Did this make the Pescatons evil, or were they so with the way in which they attempted to take the earth at any cost? Although the invasion story implies a world wide threat, the unfolding drama happens within the localised area of London as depicted on the record sleeve. And, once the Doctor discovers the effect that sound has on the unwelcome invaders; they are perhaps despatched quite suddenly and the story is brought swiftly to a close. It is great to hear again those moments where Tom and Elisabeth are playing to their characters and the shared interplay between them is just as we enjoyed and much admired from the time. Years later, I liked revisiting their partnership again in those early feature length VHS releases of 'Pyramids of Mars' and 'The Brain of Morbius.' The fact that 'The Pescatons' adventure had been recorded prior to Elisabeth Sladen's departure from the programme in 1976 is a blessing. 'The Pescatons' is a great memento of the programme during its 1970's heyday and a gift to the fans of one of it's most popular partnerships. Definitely worth seeking out and giving it a go if you have not heard it. There was a more recent 2005 CD release in which a bonus interview with Elisabeth Sladen was included or you could try tracking down the 2017 record store day pressing on the Demon Records label; where it was paired up with 'Doctor Who Sound Effects' on a green and orange double LP. I will leave the last words from the Doctor himself 'and so my friends our story is at an end. The TARDIS is waiting and I must move on to another time and another place....'

HORROR OF FANG ROCK

Review by Oliver Dallas

*Aye, though we hunted high and low,
And hunted everywhere,
Of the three men's fate we found no
trace
Of any kind in any place,
But a door ajar, and an untouched meal,
And an over toppled chair.*

'Horror of Fang Rock' is less of a beginning of a new era and more of a beginning of the end for the previous one. Although it was the first serial produced by Graham Williams, the actual content and tone of the story is more akin to something that Philip Hinchcliffe would have commissioned. Anyone who was not aware of the changeover in 'producership', might presumably have watched it on first broadcast and assumed that it was business as usual. Mary Whitehouse probably watched it as well and assumed that all her criticisms about the violence in the previous season were being ignored.

I wish I could say that this was a deliberate choice on script editor Robert Holmes' part to ensure a smooth transition and to irritate one of his biggest detractors, but as we all know, this story was written and made at the last minute due to many internal factors, such as the Head of Drama, Grahame McDonald vetoing another storyline ('The Witch Lords') halfway through the scripting stage, and the production team being forced to move out of Television Centre in London for a week and record at Pebble Mill, Birmingham instead.

As a result, no one involved in the making of this story seems to have a positive word to say about it; director Paddy Russell was indifferent to the script, Tom Baker found it boring, and guest star Colin Douglas (Ruben) presumably hated it as much as he hated the programme. Even Louise Jameson, who usually manages to find a positive in anything that she's starred in seems to write this one off as a failure. "The whole thing just had a kind of a 'let's make the best of it' feel about it," she once said in a DWM interview.

Judging by all these different accounts, this production was nothing short of a disaster and should have been seen as such by the audience of the time - except it wasn't and is now considered one of the crowning jewels of not just the era, but the entire programme. So why do fans and casual audiences alike continue to hold it in such high regard, despite the cast and crew's continued insistence that we shouldn't?

For a start, it was written by the late, great Terrance Dicks, someone who delivered some of his best work for the show when he was under pressure (see 'The War Games' and 'The Five Doctors'), so already you are guaranteed a well-told and entertaining story. His experience as script editor also ensures that it has a tight structure and that everyone and everything in it serves a purpose. For example, as well as being as a unique location, the lighthouse is also the cause and solution to the prob-

lem that our heroes face, a McGuffin hidden in plain sight. Killing off the entire supporting cast (a first for the series), also demonstrates Dicks' willingness to take risks, something that's never really been done before or since.

Despite her reservations towards the script, which she cited as overambitious, Paddy Russell's strong direction supports the already strong material on the page. It's a match made in heaven. As well as using low lighting and close-up shots to help create a sense of tension and claustrophobia in the studio scenes, the sparse use of incidental music throughout the production helps to build suspense and to discomfort the audience, especially in the episode one cliffhanger. Her formidable, no-nonsense personality on set also ensured that the similarly formidable Tom Baker stuck largely to what was written in the script, and as result, he ends up delivering what I think is one of his finest performances in the role. For the first time, arguably since Patrick Troughton, you find yourself doubting the Doctor's confidence and ability. Much of this performance may be put down to Paddy's direction of Tom and to her ability to 'persuade' him to dial back the eccentricity.

That's not to say that this story doesn't contain any humour (especially from Tom, whose delivery of, "By morning we might all be dead" is him at his uncontrollable best!). If it wasn't for the lack of a studio audience, then the conflict between the supporting characters could very easily be viewed in much the same way as the classic Class Sketch from The Frost Report

(and later The Two Ronnies). Colonel Skinsale looks down on Lord Palmerdale because he's middle class, Palmerdale looks up to Skinsale because he's upper class but looks down on the likes of Vince because he's lower class. And Vince just knows his place!

Which brings me to the only criticism that I have of this story apart from the dodgy CSO effects. Because of the decidedly selfish attitudes on display, it does make it very difficult to empathise with a lot (if not, all) of the supporting characters, especially as they all end up getting killed off. For example, although Skinsale dies helping the Doctor to retrieve a rare diamond from Palmerdale's corpse, his demise could have very easily been avoided if he had not stayed behind to retrieve the rest for himself. He is ultimately killed by his own greed. When the Doctor informs Leela that he died, "with honour", you do wonder if he is being sarcastic.

But that minor gripe aside, there is a very good reason why no one has attempted to write another story set on a lighthouse since 'Fang Rock', and that is because Terrance Dicks set the bar impossibly high. Many fans consider it to be the peak of the show's original run, and after watching it again, I cannot help but agree.



THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

Review by James Ashworth

'The Invisible Enemy' is a story of contradictions. With Graham Williams wanting to enter with a flourish, it was the most expensive Doctor Who serial ever at the time of filming, with many model as well as visual and practical effects. On the other hand, the production team had to rush key sequences to stay on track, leading to a story which sometimes looks a bit thrown together. The script, meanwhile, counterbalances delightful moments between characters with a frostier relationship between the show's leads off camera. Despite these contradictions, however, one thing is certain – it's always a story of science.

This isn't a particular surprise, given that 'The Invisible Enemy' was reportedly inspired by both a newspaper article on virus mutations and another in Scientific American on the subject of disease and the mind. Together, these articles were enough to set the minds of Bob Baker and David Martin to pitch a story with a viral villain, one who could invade even the Doctor's mind. It's a villain clearly shaped with the idea of Darwinian evolution firmly in mind, the Nucleus stating that "the law is survival of the fittest."

However, defining what the Nucleus actually is beyond that proves rather difficult. It's clear that the authors are playing fast and loose with a variety of different scientific and psychological concepts, such that even its identity as a virus is hard to pin down. There are a variety of different types, from retrovi-

ruses which insert their DNA into the hosts' to DNA and RNA viruses of all kinds. Given the complexity of the lifecycle of many of these viruses, it's likely that Baker and Martin are probably going to go for the most easily understood form – a double-stranded DNA virus, examples of which cause chicken pox, smallpox, and the common cold. In general, these viruses enter cells, use their cellular machinery to duplicate themselves, and then spread.

Of course, it's not just a virus of organic life – the Nucleus can also infect machines. Another of the many ideas which 'The Invisible Enemy' throws out is the fear of being replaced by machines, and the resentment that can cause. While it's really the first concept that the story throws out there, with Meeker complaining about how the ship is being piloted by computer, it never really goes anywhere. Given the control the Nucleus has over the infected, the ability of its drones to rapidly adapt (e.g. to the radiation guns), and the general concern of the story about technology, it does sometimes feel like 'The Invisible Enemy' was just one step away from using technological viruses to create Cybermen – perhaps something similar to the Cybermites of 'Nightmare in Silver'.

Speaking of mites, the Nucleus is also something of an arthropod, but as with other aspects, it's a mix of many different varieties. While it may look like a prawn, hives have to be prepared for its



tively abstract concept that John Scott Martin could also wear, it never really delivers the sense of gravitas or threat that the Nucleus does when it's just a faceless voice. It also suggests that any of the research Baker and Martin may have been reading was either not passed on to the design team, or was discarded in favour of other concerns, as the 3D structure of viruses was becoming much better known in the 1970s.

reproduction, suggesting bees, while the Swarm is more than willing to sacrifice some of its members for the greater good, like ants using their own bodies to build a raft so that their queen will survive. There's also a hive-like mind between the drones – sometimes they all move as one, but other times, they bicker among themselves. The story even suggests that Time Lords might have something of a hive mind themselves, through the 'reflex link' in their brains – though whether this is meant to refer to the Matrix is never elaborated upon.

All this is to say that there's a lot feeding into the Nucleus, which may help to explain why its design is a bit of a hodgepodge. For a being that exists in somewhere between the biological world of the brain and the psychological world of the mind, the design is neither aesthetically or scientifically satisfying. Given that the design was reportedly left until after the expensive model work was out of the way, it's no surprise that it's probably the worst monster design of the season. While it's easy to sympathise with the designers having to create a costume for a rela-

Putting the Nucleus to one side for the moment, 'The Invisible Enemy' is perhaps most memorable for the cloning of the Doctor and Leela, and their subsequent journey into the Doctor's mind. While this section obviously owes a debt to the film *Fantastic Voyage*, and its novelisation by Isaac Asimov, the use of clones may also have come from other ideas in the zeitgeist at the time. In December 1975, a little under two years before 'The Invisible Enemy's' broadcast, Dr Derek Bromhall published a paper which demonstrated how cell nuclei could be transferred into rabbit eggs, the first steps towards the cloning of mammals which would culminate in the cloning of Dolly the sheep in the 1990s. The process also made use of viruses, perhaps inspiring a link between these two scientific concepts. Even if Baker and Martin didn't actually see the paper itself, they may have been aware of the works of fiction it inspired such as *The Boys from Brazil*, which was released a few months before 'The Invisible Enemy' was commissioned.

Of course, the clones of the story swift-

ly diverge from reality as they aren't really clones, but short-lived 'carbon copies' of the Doctor and Leela produced by the Kilbracken technique. These copies, somehow, are sympathetic to the originals, feeling their pain and dying if the others do. It's never really explained why, and with the rapid pace of different ideas being thrown at the audience, that makes perfect sense. It does seem a bit of a missed opportunity, however, to not address the ethics of creating a short-lived clone just to save the life of its original. While it's probably hard to do the issue justice in the time available, it's not impossible for sci-fi to discuss these issues – for instance, the episode *Similitude* of *Star Trek: Enterprise* deals with this particular topic.

The Kilbracken clones, however, aren't the only thing that the story doesn't explain. One of the most crucial elements of 'The Invisible Enemy' is that Leela is immune from the effects of the Swarm, marking her out as a 'reject' which the Nucleus wants destroyed. Initial scans reveal no immunity factor in Leela, with suggestions that her resistance might be psychological, or, less kindly, as a result of her level of intellect. However, fast forward to Part Four, and it turns out there is an antibody in Leela

after all. It's symptomatic of just how many plates the final part is trying to balance that this all gets a bit lost amid the explosive conclusion (which Leela also anticipates), but an interesting explanation does raise itself. Leela's instincts are dialled to 11 in this story, almost to the point of being psychic, and given this is in her past, it might be that by the time of 'The Face of Evil', humans have developed an instinct to the presence of the Swarm, as well as a way to resist it.

Speaking of companions, any discussion of 'The Invisible Enemy' wouldn't be complete without mentioning the debut of one of the Doctor's most faithful companions – K9. While the robotic pooch might be silent at first, John Leeson soon provides the spark of life which has made the character a perennial favourite. While K9 hasn't quite developed the personality that later stories would provide yet, spending a great deal of time fighting or filling in for the Doctor, the amount of money



spent on the prop ensures that it's instantly recognisable and sticks in the memory. This must have helped Graham Williams decide to make K9 a part of the TARDIS team in a scene which is tagged on but perfectly serviceable.

K9's creator, Professor Marius, also deserves a mention. Played by Frederick Jaeger, who had previously appeared in 'The Savages' and 'Planet of Evil', the irrepressible academic is much more than a side character. While Tom Baker is busy lying on a table, Marius takes on the role of the Doctor for the story, and is in many ways much more likeable than the Fourth Doctor 'The Invisible Enemy' gives us. The scenes where the 'official' Doctor and his surrogate are electric, and given that Baker and Martin previously wrote 'The Three Doctors', it's no surprise that conversations between the two characters are a lot of

fun. While Professor Marius is certainly the friendlier face of the Doctor in this story, that's no slight on Tom Baker, who manages to do a good job differentiating between his regular performance, his infected self, and being controlled by the Nucleus.

By the time Marius bids farewell to the Doctor, Leela and K9, viewers will have enjoyed a four parter that can never be accused of running out of ideas. While its ambition sometimes overcomes its budget, it's clear from background details, like the 'Finglish' spellings of the far future, that a lot of care went into bringing 'The Invisible Enemy' together. With the Swarm and Marius having never returned, aside from in a few pieces of spin-off media, perhaps the 60th anniversary would be a great time for Doctor Who to revisit this science-filled serial.



IMAGE OF THE FENDAHL

Review by Alan Stevens

A powerful and clever horror story, with pertinent things to say about faith and perception, Chris Boucher's 'Image of the Fendahl' was the last serial to be commissioned by outgoing script editor Robert Holmes, and considered "easily the best script of the season" by Doctor Who's new producer Graham Williams.

The narrative is inspired by the palaeontology craze of the mid-1970s, when the Leakey family and Donald Johanson, all shameless publicity hacks, were competing over whose finds were the most significant. They thought it amusing to give the hominid skeletons they excavated the nicknames "Zinj" and "Lucy" – something mirrored when Colby dubs the skull "Eustace". The scientists' dog "Leakey", is so-called, ostensibly because he is an "old bone hunter", but with an extra connotation of poor housetraining.

There is a suggestion of a Lovecraft connection as well, with the Fendahl as a counterpart of the dead god Cthulhu, who will awake and devour humanity once "the stars are right", while the sinister religious overtones of the cult are reminiscent of the way Cthulhu is worshipped by humans.

Boucher has acknowledged the film version of *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967) and novelist Dennis Wheatley as inspiration. He also cites a short story "about a society which after growing up and achieving scientific and technical expertise, built this spaceship. Whereupon an alien, who had set the whole

thing in motion, popped up out of hibernation, climbed in the ship, and flew away. The population then collapsed into barbarism and eventually returned to primitive life forms, went back to being rats as I recall."

The focus of the adventure is the impact the revival of the Fendahl has on a team of scientists and locals, in and around the Priory, an isolated country house.

Three of the team, Adam Colby, Thea Ransome, and Dr. Fendelman all have fairly clear job descriptions (Colby is a palaeontologist, Ransome his dating specialist, and Fendelman an electronics expert and the team's financial backer). Maximilian Stael's position is less clear, beyond that of Fendelman's trusted right-hand man. He wears a lab coat and has an air of casual authority but he is not addressed as a doctor. He operates a computer for Fendelman early on,



but later (with apparent skill) performs an autopsy. Judging from all this, he could be a pathologist, but this begs the question of why Fendelman would want one on his team as they were not expecting to find any dead bodies.

Stael's name and looks are Germanic (Scott Fredericks being of recent German descent) but he does not have an accent, unlike Fendelman, who Moss describes as "foreign". Assumedly, this was worked out between the actors themselves to forestall any implied xenophobia.

It is Thea who ultimately becomes the medium for the rebirth of the Fendahl, and the Core of the gestalt creature. There appears to be no explicit reason for this except it's in line with the Dennis Wheatley tradition of women being party to demonic forces and may also allude to the fate of Julie Christie's character during A for Andromeda and of Barbara Judd in *Quatermass and the Pit*. Besides, the Ancient Greek representation of Nemesis is female.

Equally, 'Thea' is one letter off "Theia" the Titan goddess of sight and vision, who, like the Fendahl is associated with a hypothetical ancient planet from our Solar system, lending her name to it; and 'Ransome', as the author has confirmed, is a play on the word "ransom" — defined as either "A consideration paid or demanded for the release of someone/something from captivity", or more intriguingly "A redemption from sin and its consequences."

Within the story, Thea was selected because she was alone in the laboratory with the skull when it first activated. Leela and Mrs. Tyler experience the

creature in dreams; however, both are said to have a sixth sense. The death of the hiker in Part One, incidentally, occurs only because he is near the fissure (as the Doctor defines it, "a weakness in the fabric of space and time. Every haunted place has one") and the Fendahl, while absorbing energy from the scanner's action on the rift, takes the opportunity to feed off him as well.



Later, the Fendahl tries to switch to the Doctor, presumably regarding him as a more suitable medium than Thea. The Time Lord subsequently refers to the skull as a "mutation generator" aiming to recreate itself using similar genetic material (he also says it is psychotelekinetic, meaning it can control your muscles telepathically). This would imply there are issues of suitability and compatibility at work. If, as happens in *Qua-*



termass and the Pit, some people are more genetically predisposed to its mental dominance than others, it might explain why Colby is unaffected. Equally, perhaps it's Colby's sceptical personality which saves him from being taken over.

The latter reflects a major theme within the narrative. Boucher, a self-confessed atheist, here portrays belief as the key to unleashing evil and gives resolutely secular explanations for its occurrence. The Fendahl may possess divine facets — performing miracles and having mysterious motives — but it is also presented as an alien being. Even Mrs. Tyler's psychic powers are said to stem from the fissure. The Fendahl, moreover, does not speak: earlier, Boucher had been similarly resistant to writing lines for the messianic computer Xoanon in 'The Face of Evil', on the grounds it was impossible to write dialogue for a being designated as God.

Despite this secular bias, Boucher seems to have a sneaking fondness for Martha Tyler, who is probably the most appealing one-off character (Colby is broadly sympathetic but ultimately he's an ambitious young man whose desire for advancement means he goes along with Fendelman's decision to withhold his discovery of the hiker's corpse from the police).

Although Mrs. Tyler's beliefs concerning the Fendahl are couched in spiritualism and superstition, it still provides her with useful insights. She also correctly interprets Ted Moss' nature and how he will meet his fate. Just before he arrives, we see in her cottage a partial Tarot sequence involving the Moon card crossed by the Sun, Death below, with

the inverted Hanged Man beside it, and the Devil and the Tower on the upper right-hand side. The moon card indicates a person who is characterised by deceit (Moss is later said not to know truth from falsehood) ruled by order (the Sun), transformation (Death), and sacrifice (the Hanged Man), who will perform a sequence of actions ending in the Devil and chaos.



In the scene where she and her son debate the nature of belief, Mrs. Tyler says if most people give credence to something, it makes it true. When he argues, "Most people used to believe that the Earth was flat, but it was still round", she retorts, "but they behaved as if 'twere flat!" Holding any unchallenged conviction will, it suggests, play into the hands of the Fendahl — including Fendelman's secular opinions about it. Only sceptics are safe. Nonetheless, this isn't presented as black and white. Alongside is an acknowledgment: religions can sometimes, inadvertently, come up with the right answer. Stael's villainy notwithstanding, the man's suicide, as the Fendahl begins to manifest, is redemptive — his sacrifice stopping the creature from achieving its full potential. Boucher's portrayal of theology is not a simple condemnation, but a recognition of both the good and bad aspects of faith.

Mrs. Tyler and Jack's conversation also highlights another element of the tale: facts are coloured by human supposition. Fendelman's conviction the pentagram in the ancient skull is "a neural relay" is unlikely, as nerves, being soft tissue, rarely show up on fossilised bone. Further, Colby thinks it is due to the way the skull was put together, and, being a trained palaeontologist who is not acting under the aegis of the Fendahl, as well as the man who actually performed the reconstruction, he is in a better position to know. The most obvious conclusion, therefore, is the whole skull is the relay, not just the symbol. The Doctor states Thea's skull should be X-rayed, and she reacts to the sight of a pentagram by touching her head, but this again, could be down to seeing patterns which do not exist. Similarly, the Fendahl Core's resemblance to a Greek goddess/Medusa is,



more plausibly, Thea's subconscious vision of what a divine female being associated with snakes should resemble, than an accurate depiction of the creature as it manifested in Kenya during the Miocene epoch. Furthermore, the ritual scenes involve a pentagram because that is how the Satanist coven conceives the nature of an evil being and the way one raises it.



Markedly, the pentagram is seen both inverted and right-side up, connoting good and evil respectively according to various cult groups, visually demonstrating how symbols are affected by human prejudice. Even the manner the Fendahl uses to obtain its power is misinterpreted by Stael and Fendelman. Stael may wire the skull up to a power cable running from the scanner, but the energy comes from the damage caused by the beam's exploitation of the already-extant space/time breach, not the scanner itself. The import of facts presented throughout are all subject to the preconceptions of the characters or the viewers at home. As Boucher said himself, "Once something is out there it will be interpreted by others as they see fit. Remember the mantra: our world is what you think it is; by definition, it cannot be anything else. And that is easily the most horrifying thought I have yet come up with."

At many junctures in the serial, it can be difficult to tell the actions individually motivated, from those of the Fendahl working through a character. Thea, for instance, could have gone into the time scanner room at the end of Part One out of simple curiosity: yet a link with the skull was established earlier, so it



may be using her to try to kill the Doctor, Mrs. Tyler and, possibly, Leela as well (employing Ted Moss as its agent). Later, she starts to confuse herself with the Fendahl, which the Doctor implies is due to it restructuring Thea's brain (something the creature has undertaken from the moment it first activated).

Again, there are personal reasons why Stael would cut the telephone lines, and perhaps also secretly release the Doctor from the store room against Fendelman's orders (explaining how Stael knows, later on, the Doctor has escaped) but both these actions serve the Fendahl. In particular, if the Doctor is not locked up, he cannot give Thea the advice she seeks, and he is also in a weak position, hiding from the security men and unable to oppose the Fendahl openly.

We assume the guard who excludes Mrs. Tyler from the Priory is a Jobs-

worth security man. However, as she has a subliminal awareness of the Fendahl's presence and how to fight it, his action may also be directed. Likewise, Colby shows immunity to its direct control (indeed, he unknowingly acts against it, for example, by switching off the scanner and thus preventing the Fendahl from killing Mrs. Tyler), but he can still be manipulated indirectly by the others at the Priory.

The motivations of the humans and the Fendahl blend into each other throughout.

Although the Time Lords imprisoned its planet of origin in a time loop, the alien, nonetheless, managed to escape, possibly before the Gallifreyan intervention: but then again, since all records relating to the Fifth Planet have become invisible, surely anything connected with it should vanish too? It is worth remembering, when it comes to the Fendahl, the Doctor is an unreliable witness: he is terrified of it, and relies entirely on myth and legend about its nature and characteristics. He casts the skull into a supernova, despite having asserted the Fendahl is indestructible, hinting again, he is susceptible to its agency.

It seems reasonable to conclude the Fendahl is so powerful it could escape the time-loop and come to Earth through a time fissure, either creating its own or exploiting an extant one. The Doctor speculates the Fendahl took in Mars on the way to Earth, in a nod to *Quatermass and the Pit* (the consequences of this for the evolutionary development of the Ice Warriors is open to debate). It is possible he's mistaken. If it commands a sufficient degree of control over space/time, it could turn up anywhere it wants.

Ultimately, the Fendahl arrived on Earth twelve million years ago, went into hibernation, and then exerted its thrall over human evolution, either because its journey had exhausted its energy reserves, it was hiding from the Time Lords, or its natural life cycle is focused around periods of feeding and dormancy. It may be all three, but significantly, what the time scanner picked up was not the creature's death, as Fendelman believed, but the beginning of its period of torpidity. There was, of course, no point in turning up in 1977, as it needed to start from scratch to create its host animals.

This inclusion of host animals suggests something interesting about the relationship between humans and Time Lords.

Humans, having been shaped by the dormant Fendahl, resemble the Core, as do the Time Lords and, if the Doctor is anything to go by, they both share a similar race memory and horror tradition as humans. Intriguingly, there are also thirteen parts to the Fendahl gestalt, paralleling the Time Lord regeneration cycle. As Boucher tended to operate on the notion of all things looking human having a common origin, by implication Time Lords must be related to homo sapiens, even if neither party make the connection on their own.

The serial also takes place in a season featuring either the Time Lords ('The Invasion of Time'); or Time-Lord-influenced figures ('Underworld').

Boucher has said "The first thing I noticed when Graham took over was this extremely weird framework he had come up with for the series, which involved time paradoxes and various esoteric formulae", so whether the writers are using a prevailing source or the affinities are rooted in coincidence, is unknown, but they are definitely present.

Ironically, then, had the Fendahl not escaped, the Time Lords might well have retroactively aborted themselves.

In the end, the Fendahl remains a creature of mystery and this is the key to the story's success. By presenting the Fendahl to a varied cast of characters and exploring the way they react to it, Boucher can lay before us his take on evil, belief, and interpretation whilst creating a complex and compelling masterpiece in the process.



THE SUN MAKERS

Review by Paul Driscoll

As brilliant as the Hinchcliffe/Holmes partnership had been, the creative choices made under Graham Williams arguably suited Robert Holmes' writing far better than the gothic horror that defined much of season 12-14. Satire and political commentary couldn't get much of a look-in when the focus was on scaring the audience with tried and tested set-pieces nobody had expected to see in a teatime family drama, even accounting for Doctor Who's long established use of the cliffhanger. The one time Holmes tried to get away with some social commentary, by making Gallifrey his subject he sullied his reputation with many fans, who found the reimagining of the Time Lords a step too far ('The Deadly Assassin'). Criticism of Holmes became commonplace and for many disgruntled critics, the in-jokes so redolent in 'The Sun Makers' were evidence he had started to lose interest in the series.

Even a cursory look over Holmes' scripts should caution us against dividing the series up into distinctive eras, defined by anything more than time periods (for other examples, see Paul Booth's media studies essay 'Periodising Doctor Who' in *Science Fiction Film and Television*, Vol 7.2, 2014). Right from his very first contribution, the hugely underrated 'The Space Pirates', Holmes displayed a keen eye for satire. In the 1969 serial, the competing ideologies of the private and public sectors are played out among the stars with Milo Clancey joking about his own unscrupulous profiteering by de-

scribing the planet Ta as having been reduced to 'a piece of Gruyere cheese'. Holmes would also revel in sending up UK immigration policies in the Pertwee serial 'Carnival of Monsters' (1973).

Holmes hadn't taken the shackles off in 'The Sun Makers' because he no longer cared, but because he had greater creative freedom thanks to Williams' adventurous response to the edict from above to tone down the violence and horror of the show. Instead of softening the pre-credit 'sting' with a watered down, more family friendly approach, Williams gave permission for his writers and directors to hit the audience with a different kind of sting, one aimed against them, their world, and/or their beloved series. This occasionally meant he would have to reign his writers in. Indeed, he vetoed some of Holmes' and Pennant's more on-the-nose references in 'The Sun Makers' such as by changing the name of the villains from the Usurers to the Usurians (which even then sounds like a compromise, with his preferred option being the Saurians). It was a risk Williams was willing to take to bring the series out of the glare of Mary Whitehouse's moral crusade without weakening its impact on the audience.

Much of this playful irreverence was also down to Tom Baker. At the top of his game and intoxicated by the hold he was having, particularly amongst younger viewers, he now positioned himself as a creative lead. In the middle of filming for 'The Sun Makers', the

news broke that he had received hundreds of letters from fans with money to help fund his proposed Doctor Who movie ('Doctor Who Meets Scratchman')... funds that he was forced to return for legal reasons. He even attended the work party of WD and HO Wills Tobacco Factory where parts of the serial had been filmed, and later wrote a piece in the company's newsletter offering to provide personalised autographs for anyone who missed the event. Shortly after filming, he was the star guest at two more events where he could mingle with the fans and embrace the persona of the Doctor like some kind of Messianic figure.

Interviewed on the radio shortly after the broadcast of Part Four of 'The Sun Makers' (in a piece about a charity Jules Verne audio adaptation he was involved with), Baker admitted he was a

'compulsive interferer'. Williams let him get away with it, pampering to his star man, and allowing him to adlib and alter the scripts as he saw fit. One noticeable case in 'The Sun Makers' is when Leela gets zapped by the security door trap. Going off script, he muses 'why do the girls never listen?' The improvised line cleverly draws attention the Doctor Who stereotype of the damsel in distress (reducing the supposedly different Leela to the same), but it also reflects the difficulties in Baker's relationship with Louise Jameson at the time (clashes which impacted directly on the script with the production team keen to separate them as much as possible). The blurring of the boundary between Tom Baker, the actor, and the character he was playing was facilitated by a few fourth wall breaking scenes during this period, but it also became a catalyst for many more unscripted examples.





Some of the slapstick comedy in 'The Sun Makers' is distracting, such as the needless 'where is K9' scene and the guard doing a roly-poly onto the set closely followed by Leela with her knife. Hade's mimicking of the Collector's pronunciation of Doctor, with the emphasis on the second syllable is also grating, and the Collector spinning around in his wheelchair like an excitable child at play, while no doubt intended to undermine the authority of the Usurian, just looks like part of a performance the actors are clearly revelling in. Both Henry Woolf (The Collector) and Richard Leech (Hade) give Baker a run for his money in the scene-stealing stakes.

Jokes about the Inland Revenue aside, the core of the story is the revolution of the oppressed against an occupying power. But because it all happens so quickly, it's hard to believe that any meaningful and lasting change has really taken effect. Marn, judging by the smirk, has surely switched sides only as an act of self-preservation. If her offer to join the revolutionists did get accepted and even if they did all relocate back to Earth, there's every chance she would have become a human replacement for the Collector. Yes, the anxiety

inducing drugs have kept the masses under control, but simply 'clearing the air' is not going to alter the mindsets of those who have suffered years of oppression. There is an irony in the fact that Roy Macready who played Cordo couldn't get the gun to fire in his victory announcement scene, resulting in several retakes. This is a changing of the guard, not necessarily a restructuring of society. The real work starts after the Doctor has left them to it.

Terrance Dicks' novelisation of 'The Sun Makers' makes two significant changes to the final scenes. Instead of leaving Marn's fate in the air, he has her paraded by the revolutionaries as the highest profile convert to their cause. More tellingly, he adds a note of reflection and regret to Hade's death. After the governor had been thrown off the roof, some are left wondering if they had gone too far. The joy over Hade's death in the televised version is not simply down to time constraints, however. Cuts were made to the scene that if reinstated would have added even more gloating by the rebels as Hade was carried to his death. Perhaps Dicks was getting revenge on Holmes for the rewriting of 'The Brain of Morbius', though his awareness of his target audience (pun intended) would explain the dumbing down of the tax references elsewhere in the book.

'The Sun Makers' looks incredible, the design work with Tony Snoaden's initial inspiration coming from Aztec civilisation is superb and Pennant's decision to film as much of the story on location raises the game significantly. The underground rebel base was filmed in Camden Town's Deep Tube Shelters. Not only does it add authenticity to the

dark, damp and squalid conditions, it also provides a strong contrast to the scenes in the Collector's offices. Unfortunately, the studio scenes are not quite as impactful and the effects suffer from the usual failures of CSO at the time. The practical move away from the highly decorative Aztec design towards a minimalist functional style - to allow for cost saving unrefined props (though Pennant claimed 'we settled on a clumsy, wooden texturing to go with the clumsy, wooden thinking of the taxmen and the work units they dominated', Talkback, The Seventies, p189), undermines the supposed luxury of Hade's living conditions and creates an odd mismatch in the overall environment.

Like much of this transitional season, the horror is still very much in evidence in 'The Sun Makers', despite the tone of the writing. Veet is a particularly nasty character, and this is far from the 'everybody lives' ideal of the revived series. Indeed, Leela may well have been killed off by the end of the serial. The steaming would have been a particularly nasty way to go, though the method of execution ended up being written like a 1960s live action Batman trap.

Shortly before the first episode was aired, Doctor Who twice became headline news. Firstly, Tom Baker sensationally revealed he was ready to leave. It was to be the first of many such claims, though a little over a month later he would say he couldn't imagine ever going (in the aforementioned

radio interview). It was also announced that Louise Jameson was moving on. For her character Leela, 'The Sun Makers' was a perfect fit. Leela could naturally identify with the cause of the underclasses, but her own instincts for violent revolution made her highly critical of Cordo's 'lack of manliness'. Rarely has the character been so well used on screen. Her relationship with Andred in The Invasion of Time lacks the same authenticity and leads to a hugely unsatisfying end for the character (at least as far as the TV series is concerned). There had been talk of Leela being killed off in 'The Sun Makers', but for another alternative ending, it would have been fun to imagine what would have happened had she stayed on Pluto to support the revolution. For one thing, a power struggle between Veet and Leela would have been a given.

Praise the company of Holmes and Williams, because for all its faults, 'The Sun Makers' remains one of the most entertaining and rewatchable stories of the decade.



UNDERWORLD

Review by Joseph Chambers

'Underworld' is a story from my favourite TV show featuring my favourite actor to play the Doctor (Tom Baker) and my favourite companion (Leela). It also features K-9, is predominantly on a spaceship and has an essence of *Star Wars* meets Greek Mythology. However, despite all this going for it I cannot say this story is very good. But then again, neither can I say it is bad. It just sort of is. It exists. Much of it does not work even though it should, and just why does Jason wants his golden fleece...sorry, I mean Jackson wants his genetic data?

Firstly, right from the off, I do not think that Tom Baker and Louise Jameson (and indeed John Leeson) could have done anything more. They seem to be trying their absolute hardest to work with a script that didn't quite gel, was far too ambitious for the budget the

show had to work with and which did not quite seem to understand the character of the Doctor fully or use Leela and K-9 to their full potentials. The script wrote

Leela to be a fast learning and curious savage, but Louise brought and still brings a warmth and humanity to Leela that could have so easily been overlooked. This is why to this day, she remains and will always be, my favourite Doctor Who companion. In addition, John Leeson as K-9 is especially adorable in this one particularly when he makes little yipping noises when the Doctor attaches things to his ears. The only moment for the Doctor that seems a little off for me is when he channels gas into another room and is only mildly curious about where it went when I personally might be panicked that it might now be choking innocent people and possibly my own companion.

The models and miniatures used in this serial are good. They actually look a lot like the model shots used in the sitcom *Red Dwarf* and considering that would-



n't be broadcast for another 11 years, Doctor Who is ahead of the game in that regard. The visual effects for space itself are not too bad either and I enjoyed them when used in model shots and when used in green screen shots.

The best excuse I can come up with for the weaker elements of the story is that it is a low-budget product of its time. There are some genuinely tense moments and given what they had to cope with behind the scenes, it is really quite an achievement that it looks as good as it does, but I can see why it is known as 'the one with the terrible green-screen' that at the end of the day, simply doesn't hold up very well.

I do not need to tell you that *Star Wars* was a clear influence on 'Underworld'. Now on paper, this sounds like a great thing. *Star Wars* was very popular in 1978, having come out the previous year, but unfortunately, due to the budget limitations this come across closer in quality to a fan project tribute to *Star Wars* than a full-scale television spectacle.

Some parts of 'Underworld' do amuse me;

The Doctor stopping to explain how beautiful the spiral nebula is (which is well done for 1978) only to then declare it so dangerous they have to leave! That is either stupid or funny, I can't tell.

The guest cast being absolutely emotionless whilst a computer burps out information.

Baker suddenly shouting and scaring the life out of his companion will never

get old and is something future incarnations would go on to do.

Time-Lords being gods to certain races is an interesting concept and one that is sadly not really explored on screen again.

The ship really isn't that terrible for a story that had very little money to make it with. The costumes are not too bad for the era either.

There is a moment where we see Leela and The Doctor are on the floor for no reason and all the Doctor can say is "Trouble".

Tom Baker's arm is slinged in his scarf, why? Behind the scenes someone is seen telling Tom that he is wearing his scarf in a very weird way and his response is basically that Gallifreyans wear their scarves differently to earthlings.

The ship turning slowly into a planet makes enough sense to be passable by Doctor Who standards.

Norman Stewart's direction was a bit lazy if I am frank. These people who are enslaved only seem mildly put out by their situation and even when they are no longer slaves do not seem too fussed by the events.

'Underworld' is an ambitious story with insufficient money to make the concept work. It is a well thought out, albeit a little plagiarised story that unfortunately suffered from a tightly constrained execution that simply made it impossible to live up to its high ambition.



THE INVASION OF TIME

Review by Don Klees

For such a writer-driven programme, Doctor Who has a remarkable tradition of offering blurry answers to questions of authorship, extending to the show's beginnings. In the absence of a singular creator - even a notional one, like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* would later have - an assembly of writers, producers and even the BBC's head of drama could all stake a claim to its genesis. In that context, it seems strangely fitting that 'The Invasion of Time', a story whose script is credited to an internal BBC pseudonym, provides one of the best-case studies of authorship in Doctor Who and the biases that skew how fans engage with it.

It is the rare Doctor Who story, especially from the so-called classic series, that doesn't ask viewers to make at least some allowances for the differential between intention and execution.

Even one as acclaimed as 'The Caves of Androzani', with a sharp script, dynamic direction, and strong performances from both its stars and guest artists alike, features the Magma beast, as dodgy a monster as the series has ever put on screen across its history. However, while Peter Davison's on-screen swansong resists being defined by a dubiously depicted threat, something similar weighs on the reputation of 'The Invasion of Time'. More so than most Doctor Who stories, nearly every aspect of this 1978 story conveys a conflict between the production team's ambitions and the realities of a BBC drama budget.

As with the other Doctor Who serial credited to David Agnew, the making of 'The Invasion of Time' was dictated by the interplay between budget considerations and concerns about the original



scripts. Despite the common thread, the two stories experienced very different destinies. 'City of Death' benefitted from part of its David Agnew being Douglas Adams and having an astute production manager work out that the story would save money by becoming the first Doctor Who story to film overseas. In the process, it gained a reputation as one of those special pre-2005 stories you could show non-fans without having to make excuses, earning the designation of classic well before the phrase or classic series entered the fan lexicon.

'The Invasion of Time' gets no such accolades. It's resided far down the list of fan favorites since at least the 1990s and stands out as the six-part serial that detractors who insist that they're just a four-parter and two-parter fused together can point to as evidence without fear of contradiction. To be fair, 'City of Death' is a better story, but 'The Invasion of Time' deserves better than being seen as merely an inferior sequel to 'The Deadly Assassin'. There are worse stories that poll much higher among fans, not to mention several that most fans have never actually seen (at least not in their entirety) to make a fair judgment on their relative merits.

Like many stories that are better or at least more entertaining than their reputation, perception seems to be the key. Specifically, perceptions of one of its literal and figurative authors, Graham Williams. He too was David Agnew. If anything, as one of the people involved in writing both stories, Williams was arguably David Agnew more than anybody else. Yet, from one end of his tenure to the other, the producer's contributions to its successes tend to be min-

imized in favor of emphasizing perceived mistakes.

While there were certainly questionable decisions on Williams' part during his run, there's relatively little about the origins of 'The Invasion of Time' that can truly be considered mistakes on his part. The decision to return to Gallifrey after 'The Deadly Assassin' made both practical and creative sense. The prior story had reinvented the Doctor's home planet as an environment worth exploring, rather than just a dull place they wanted to escape from, and the Time Lord costumes and props offered a means to mitigate some of the financial challenges the producer had been wrestling with since taking on the program from Philip Hinchcliffe. Having secured the blessing of 'The Deadly Assassin's' writer, former script editor Robert Holmes, to revisit his concept of Time Lord society - and use one of his characters, the Doctor's mentor, Borusa - Williams and new script editor Anthony Road then hired an experienced and capable writer to flesh it out.

David Weir wrote episodes for a variety of British drama series before being hired for Doctor Who. These ranged from Danger Man and A Family at War to The Onedin Line and Space: 1999. Though Space: 1999 had a far bigger budget than Doctor Who, the production team probably weren't as worried, with Weir's episode having been, 'The Black Sun', a highly philosophical installment, largely confined to existing sets. Unfortunately for Road, and especially Williams, the scripts Weir delivered for Killers In the Dark were rather more expensive. The intended revelation that the Time Lords shared Gallifrey with a race of technologically advanced cat

people wasn't inherently unworkable. A stadium-sized gathering of them, though, was apparently too much. Conceding that even a combination of actual cats and CSO wasn't up to the task was doubtless a humbling admission for the team that made 'Underworld'. Nevertheless, they pulled the plug on the scripts, quickly exchanging one headache for several more.

Gerald Blake, whose credits in science-fiction television included *Out of the Unknown* and *Survivors*, as well as the *Doctor Who* serial 'The Abominable Snowman' a decade earlier, had already been assigned as the story's director when the decision was made to abandon 'Killers of the Dark'. Location scouting and design work was also in progress, meaning the episodes that replaced it needed to be compatible with plans already made. Locations were especially important, as an impending industrial action meant the as-yet-undefined replacement would get far less time for studio recording than would typically be allocated.

With the added complication of the strike, BBC management tried convincing Williams to drop the season's final story and roll the unused resources over into the next season, an odd precursor to what would happen two years later with 'Shada'. Williams declined, in part because he didn't want to further delay the long planned quest for the Key to Time. Taking advantage of a BBC contingency fund that provided resources for additional location shooting, the production team had the resources in place to make the story, with one key exception, the scripts.

Since the work already done dictated carrying on with a sequel to 'The Deadly Assassin', Robert Holmes was an obvious choice to approach, and one whose own tenure as script editor spoke to his ability to work quickly. Having only recently stepped down as script editor, Holmes declined. Deciding that the lord helps those who help themselves, Williams and Read, then opted to write it, even though BBC policies at the time discouraged script editors from commissioning themselves,



requiring use of the famed pseudonym. Despite wanting a bit of a break from Doctor Who, Holmes still provided David Agnew with two important things to help with the replacement script.

One was advice on structure, with Holmes acknowledging that there was truth to the aforementioned fan belief that many of Doctor Who's six-part serials were effectively a two-part and a four-part story stitched together. The second was the use of another of the writer's creations for the program, the Sontarans. Ironically, considering the budget constraints, 'The Invasion of Time' was the first time multiple members of the clone-based race appeared on screen together in the same scene. Like the wise decision to hold off on revealing their involvement until the end of the fourth episode, it shows that David Agnew was quite cognizant of the need to maximize their impact.

Of course, for this approach to work, the story needed an antagonist for the first four episodes. The chosen method of addressing this need manages the neat trick of making the story both the best and worst that it could be. The first would-be conquerors of Gallifrey encountered in 'The Invasion of Time', the Vardans, are a good idea for an enemy. Having a race that can broadcast themselves from place to place and read thoughts too has lots of narrative potential. Unfortunately, the presentation is alternately boring and unimpressive, sometimes both.

To be fair, their energy form at least hints at otherworldliness, even if it looks a bit cheap. It's their unmasking as a garden variety militaristic society, with uniforms suggesting the costume

designer had recently seen *Star Wars* that truly disappointed. Because *Star Wars* was not widely released in the UK until shortly before 'The Invasion of Time' premiered, that scenario seems unlikely. That said, timing conspired to make this story the first one British viewers at large experienced in the wake of George Lucas' film.

Doctor Who arguably has more in common with *Star Wars* than it does Star Trek, being more of a space-fantasy series rather than science-fiction. Nevertheless, *Star Wars* changed the game for both. Star Trek would soon return as a well-budgeted theatrical film, with special effects far removed from the inventive but sometimes shaky ones in the original. Doctor Who had no such option; it was a BBC drama through and through, with the kind of spectacle possible for US studio productions not an option. Fortunately, Graham Williams had access to one source of spectacle other productions could not match.

However much it drove him crazy, one imagines that Williams was well aware that he had a secret weapon in the form of Tom Baker. A rubbish enemy is not nearly as detrimental to the drama with a star like Baker as the lead. Though by no means the finest actor to play the Doctor, his ability to serve as both the story's hero and villain while playing just a single character sets him apart. His only peer in this respect is not Patrick Troughton - however impressive playing four distinct characters in 'The Enemy of the World' was - but rather Peter Capaldi in 'Hell Bent'.

Like that later story, 'The Invasion of Time' wrongfoots viewers not just by having the Doctor seize power on

Gallifrey but also making his motives uncertain. Just a few episodes removed from Leela assuring someone that [The Doctor] has saved many fathers, now we had his expelling his companion from the Time Lord's citadel and in full megalomaniac mode for much of the story's first half. While the enduring image of Tom Baker's Doctor is the affable, grinning Bohemian, there's an unsettling edge to his performance here, one whose like wouldn't be seen again until his final story. It's surprising in some ways that Big Finish never really picked up on this element, but perhaps that reflects Baker's own preference to recreate the consensus version of his Doctor.

One aspect of the story that Big Finish has run with, though many of the relevant stories take place before 'The Invasion of Time', is the magnificent performance by Louise Jameson as Leela. The unavoidable success of the charac-

ter as something for the dads sometimes obscures how adept Jameson is at demonstrating that primitive is not synonymous with unintelligent. It's a subtle performance, one that declines to take things like force fields for granted and quite sensibly misunderstands colloquialisms such as Rodan referring to herself as a glorified traffic guard.

According to behind-the-scenes lore, Louise Jameson had told Graham Williams of her intention to leave the show well before production started on 'The Invasion of Time', but the producer held out hope to the end that the actress would change her mind. The decision to have Leela stay on Gallifrey after the defeat of the Sontarans, presumably to marry Commander Andred, rather than dying a warrior's death fighting them, disappointed many, including Jameson herself. On the other hand, there was something pleasantly aspirational in the notion that if the hero was not going to



get the girl - indeed, was uninterested in her - someone else might have the opportunity to get to know her. Admittedly, Leela and Andred's courtship emerged as suddenly as Susan staying behind on Earth with David Campbell a dozen years earlier, but at least it was her choice in this case, and both Louise Jameson and Chris Tranchell play the ending earnestly.

As do all the cast throughout the serial. While it is fun to make light of moments like one of the outsiders declaring Now, that's the language I do understand as they prepare to fight the Vardans, on balance the performances here are highly committed. The key Time Lord characters are particularly well played. Hilary Ryan has a thankless job as Rodan, the program's first female Time Lord since Susan, but she makes the shift from quiet drudgery to having her world turned upside down effectively. Milton Johns oozes officious opportunism as Castellan Kelner, while John Arnatt has a milestone role as Chancellor Borusa, becoming the first recurring Time Lord other than the Doctor or the Master played by a

different actor. The character was, of course, played by different actors in each of their four appearances, but more so than any other, this is the one that displays the substance of the connection that the audience so often heard about. The scenes between them in Part Five, when the truth about the Great Key is revealed, particularly emphasize that, amid the tongue in cheek moments, the broader story is thoroughly dramatic.

As Tom Baker's tenure continued. the balance of drama and self-indulgence became increasingly skewed, to the point where it was almost as much 'The Tom Baker Show' as Doctor Who. Baker's charm ensured that the results were sufficiently entertaining that he didn't get too much of the blame for the sometimes dodgy stories around him. Ironically, the one who got the most blame was the one who worked the hardest to moderate the star's excesses, Graham Williams. Even for the noteworthy exception 'City of Death', credit is directed in virtually every direction but one. Just ask David Agnew.



THE RIBOS OPERATION

Review by Michael Crouch

For all of the snow, black skies, stone corridors and grey catacombs, 'The Ribos Operation' always elicits a warm glow inside me, as warm as the flaming torches that light up the Halls of the Dead. It isn't the most epic of Doctor Who stories, indeed the Doctor remains largely uninvolved in Garron's attempts to sell a planet he doesn't own to the obsessed and power hungry machinations of the Graff Vynda-K, and yet events carry the viewer along, and every detail feeds into the main story in a seemingly effortless and logical way. And I believe that's where the strength of the story lay, in the world-building, all the little throwaway lines and the objectives of the characters that precipitate events. Despite just a few bits of scenery, and only ever seeing a microcosm of the whole planet, we nevertheless come away with a feeling of Ribos as a fully-rounded, populated and working world. It is a credit to the writing talents of Robert Holmes that we have this image, and that we can believe in the small band of characters we are introduced too, even though very few except for a handful of guards are actually native to the planet.

Tom Baker is on blustering form as the Doctor, and we are introduced to his new Time Lady companion, Romana, portrayed by Mary Tamm, forced upon him by the will of the White Guardian. Their relationship is quickly established as one of equals, and for the first time, we have a companion who is more than happy to give as good as she gets.

"Romana: I did graduate from the Academy with a triple first.

The Doctor: I suppose you think we should be impressed by that too?

Romana: Well it's better than scraping through with 51% at the second attempt".

This jokey banter and competition continues throughout the story as the Doctor counters Romana's knowledge with his practical experience.

Several factors elevate 'The Ribos Operation' to something greater than the sum of its parts. First, there are the sets. They are not many and are reused multiple times but they look amazing. Apparently they were taken from a production of Anna Karenina staged by the BBC the previous year, and so Ribos has the look of a 15th century Russian castle where it feels like it is perpetually night (it isn't, we do get glimpses of daylight) and where snow falls regularly. This combination gives the production a kind of muted palette brought to life by the period costumes, conical hats and flaming torches and candles that adorn the walls.

The second thing that stands out is the quality of the acting. We are in a period where, I believe it is safe to say, the nature of the series and its leading man, could occasionally invite overacting from some of the participants. Here though, the whole cast play it straight, with believable performances from all (we'll come back to them shortly). It

probably helps that the story looks like it could have been staged as a theatre production, and the actors are clearly playing to their audience.

Finally, there is the script. As we have already seen, the dialogue is simply sparkling, the actors revelling in their lines, replete with humour throughout, and it is clear that writer Robert Holmes was having a whale of a time. At one point early on in the proceedings, Garron instructs the Graff Vynda-K, "if anybody asks you where you're from, just say the North." This reference occurs several times, notably when Garron asks the Doctor where they are from. "The North," the Doctor replies. Well as we all know by now, all planets have a North.

The opening scenes in which the Doctor's TARDIS is forced to bring him to the White Guardian (Cyril Luckham), where he is tasked with finding the six segments of the Key to Time, is played out well but always feels like an intrusion into the actual story that we have come to watch. The section is credited

to writer David Agnew, a pseudonym for producer Graham Williams, whose idea of the Key to Time it was. The actual story when it does come is in complete contrast to the opening scene. Where the White Guardian is sat in a golden desert, the TARDIS bathed in a warm yellow and orange glow, their arrival on Ribos finds them materialising by a stone gatehouse in the snow and in what looks like the middle of the night against the dark backdrop of a medieval society, Romana striding proudly in a white dress and white furs, the Doctor seemingly oblivious to the weather, and K-9 relegated to the TARDIS (for now). And with this bleak and cold environment established, we are warmed by a script that sparkles under Robert Holmes' penmanship.

Iain Cuthbertson and Nigel Plaskitt shine as Garron and Unstoffs respectively, a couple of con artists who are a mix of the Machiavellian, avuncular, charming, mercenary and just ever-so slightly bumbling. They come across as a slightly more competent version of Glitz and Dibber that Holmes would



introduce a decade later. They alight on the Graff Vynda-K (Paul Seed), a deposed ruler from off-world, obsessed with regaining his throne and his armies from his treacherous half-brother. Garron lures him in to the prospect of buying Ribos to set up his new power base, and with Unstoffee's help, fool the Graff into believing that Ribos is replete with the most valuable element in the Universe, jethrik. It is all a subterfuge however, the only jethrik is the sample that Garron has secreted amongst Ribos' Crown Jewels. The Graff suspects some treachery but believes in the jethrik mines and blinded by his obsession to regain "the Levithian Crown", offers 8 million opeks for the planet. The relationship between the Graff and his right-hand man, Sholakh (Robert Keegan), forms another double-act of sorts, straight rather than comedic, and one almost Shakespearean in nature when Sholakh dies. We even have the Graff deliver a short speech direct to camera at the end of Part Two in a way that would be done by Trau Morgus in Holmes' later story, 'The Caves of Androzani'.

Just like the Graff, Romana gets taken in by Garron's story too, an opportunity for the Doctor to teach her the benefits of field work and experience.



The Doctor: A lost mine? A phoney map? Are people still falling for that old guff? I mean, are they?

Romana: You mean you didn't believe his story? But he had such honest face.

The Doctor: You can hardly be a criminal with a dishonest face, can you?

Much of the discussion between Garron and the Graff revolves around Ribos' primitive culture that ridicules the idea of the planet orbiting the sun in a long elliptical path that creates the "Ice Time" and the "Sun Time". The belief that Ribos does indeed orbit its sun, and that the ice crystals in the sky are other suns, is one put forward by Binro the Heretic who protects Unstoffee from the Graff's guards who are pursuing him.

Unstoffee: Why did you do it? (Hide him)

Binro: Well I know what it's like when every man's hand is against you.

The Graff prefers the prophecies of The Seeker (Ann Tirard), a kind of shaman-like figure who can supposedly see the future. This is essentially Holmes contrasting superstition with science, tradition with progress, and when Unstoffee confirms Binro's beliefs, we get a short but powerful and moving scene in which Binro has all his convictions confirmed. Paul Bateson portrays Binro with a lightness of touch that hints at a deeper tragedy, again almost Shakespearean and once again highlighting the staged nature of this production. The Seeker gets no such moment of nobility, killed at the Graff's hands after she has said only one shall survive the catacombs; in a further twist, it isn't the Graff either. Within these scenes, and reading between

the lines, there is the prospect that Ribos can lift itself out from this medieval mindset into a future with science and progress. In many ways, Ribos is a kind of pre-cursor to Peladon and we can imagine the latter world having gone through a similar transition in centuries past.

Of course we cannot discuss 'The Ribos Operation' without addressing the elephant in the room, or in this case, the Shrivenzale in the catacombs. Doctor Who is well known for its monsters with many of them imprinting themselves into the wider cultural world. The Shrivenzale is not one of them. Essentially a flesh-eating, hungry, armour-plated guard dog, the execution leaves something to be desired. The head initially looks good, slightly demonic with the blood of its last meal smothering his chops. It is when he has to come out of the catacombs and hunt down his prey that it fails to convince. A man wriggling about on the floor pretending to move on four stumpy legs at a pace that most able-bodied people could easily outrun is not much of a threat. Thankfully we

do not see too much of the Shrivenzale in this story and the threat tends to be implied rather than shown. The bloody jaws as it rests are enough to convince us of the danger and we are left to focus on the main hub of the story.

The Doctor and Romana are almost supporting cast members throughout this story, intent upon locating the first segment of the Key, and remaining largely uninvolved from the goings on around them. The story does give time for the Doctor/Romana relationship to develop and we get a number of fun exchanges between the two. We also get a friendly if cautious pairing of the Doctor and Garron as they navigate their own subterfuges and the machinations of the Graff Vynda-K, all of which lead to a satisfying finale. The delicious script and the stellar cast carry us along throughout and warm us against the dark and cold environs of Ribos. Not an epic tale then, but as a masterclass in plotting, characterisation and world-building, 'The Ribos Operation' is hard to beat.



THE PIRATE PLANET

Review by Tim Robins

"Romana is looking at a futuristic building located atop mountains that tower over a city on the planet Zanak

Guard: This is a forbidden object!

Romana: Why?

Guard: That is a forbidden question! You are a stranger?

Romana: Well, yes

Guard: Strangers are forbidden!

Romana: I did come with The Doctor.

Guard: Who is...?

Romana: Ah, now, don't tell me, Doctors are forbidden?

Guard: You are under arrest!..."

'The Pirate Planet', broadcast second in the Key to Time continuity, was written by Douglas Adams and directed by Pen-nant Roberts. The story opens with The Doctor and Romana attempting to materialise the TARDIS on the planet Calufrax only to arrive on an entirely different planet – Zanak, whose city streets are scattered with precious gems, including Oolian, so rare it is only found on two planets in the galaxy and Zanak is not one of them.

Over the course of 'The Pirate Planet's four episodes, The Doctor and Romana become caught up in a conflict between The Captain, the apparent ruler of Zanak, and the mysterious, telepathic Mentiads who sense that the Captain is not only plundering planets but the very life force itself.

Where is Calufrax? What is the second segment of The Key to Time? Why is the sky alight with omens presaging the

appearance of rare gemstones? Who is 'The Captain'? And can K9 best The Captain's deadly robot parrot, the Poly-phase Avitron? (The answer to this latter question is 'yes, of course he can') 'Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? laments Mula, a citizen of the planet Zanak, and so did many Doctor Who fans when they heard Adams, best known for the Radio Two comedy The Hitchhiker's Guide to Galaxy, was writing a story for Doctor Who.

Although Doctor Who had benefited from the comedic writing of Dennis Spooner and Robert Holmes, it is fair to say that, back in The Seventies, children were not thought to be watching Doctor Who from behind the sofa to escape its jokes. So fans were not at all entertained when producer Graham Williams responding to criticism of the serial's frightening content, moved the series from horror to humour.

Fans were not alone in their concern. On reading a draft of Adams's Doctor Who script, the BBC's Head of Serials, Graeme McDonald, wrote a memo expressing his concern that the script was too complex and too humorous.

I do not recall having any expectations for 'The Pirate Planet', good or bad. I do recall seeing a model shot of the Captain's mountain-top 'Bridge' at that year's Panopticon. The Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy had debuted on BBC Radio Four in March but I had not listened to it.

I was also unaware of the changes Adams's popularity had wrought on science fiction fandom. Since 1946, SF literary fans and authors had met in a London pub on the first Thursday of every month. Suddenly, as a former "First Thursday" attendee complained to me, the meetings were overrun by sci-Fi (SF media) - and particularly Doctor Who fans - keen to meet Adams in person.

I am sure that I found 'The Pirate Planet' rather silly but packed full of inventive ideas and memorable lines., I am surprised how many lines that I remember. The Doctor's description of Calufrax is "paralysingly dull, tedious and boring!" became a defining expression of the Fourth Doctor's character, at least in my mind. The Scene in which The Doctor, hurtling down a Linear Transduction Corridor, cries out, "I'll never be cruel to an electron in a particle accelerator again!" always raises a smile, although I was unaware of when and why The Doctor had been cruel to an electron particle in an accelerator prior to this remark.

McDonald's report on the draft scripts also expressed his concern that Romana was under used, a fate he felt had befallen Leela, who had ended up being unceremoniously married off on Gallifrey in the previous season.

Later, Adams would admit that he had difficulty in writing women characters and found women something of a puzzle. That said Adams and Roberts were keen to have women performers taking prominent roles in 'The Pirate Planet's' cast. Roberts changed the role of citizen Pralix's brother into his sister, Mula, played by Primi Townsend. For his part, Adams wanted a female villain (Queen Xanxia/The Nurse) who would be revealed to be a reincarnation of The Master.

Adams was keen to address what he saw as problems in past Doctor Who stories. He introduced air cars and the Linear Induction Corridor to avoid scenes of characters running down corridors. The writer also created The Captain's robot parrot (The Polyphase Avitron) as an adversary for K9.



However, the K9's scenes with The Doctor are mostly irritating, particularly the way the robot dog's nose-laser manages to fire in directions not suggested by the angle of its barrel. And dialogue like this does not help:

'Doctor: That was very good. Wasn't that good K9?

K9: Very, very, very, good master

Doctor: Oh, terribly good. Listen, I think she's [Romana] going to be alright, very alright.

K9: Very, very alright."

A bigger problem with 'The Pirate Planet' is that several scenes are bathetic. Bathos, as first defined by Alexander Pope (1727) refers to unintended failure on the part of an author to successfully attain the lofty heights to which their writing aspires.

To be sure, there are many successful, funny moments in 'The Pirate Planet'. For example, a scene in which a Zanakian citizen sorts through the packet of Jelly Babies offered to him by Romana is mirrored by The Doctor sorting through stones on the city's streets,



'Diamonds, Andromeda Blood Stones, gravel, more diamonds. Don't they have any street sweepers here?'

However, some scenes fall flat on their face. that they fail to realise Adams's obvious, comedic intent. I am sure Adams wanted the scene of a crowd cheering The Captain's announcement of a new age of prosperity to have the comical feel of crowds of peasants in, for example, 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail'. But Director Roberts is not Terry Gilliam.

The locations never rise above what they are: Welsh hillsides, a cave, a power station interior and an entrance to a disused mine. The lack of establishing shots and enough props, means that it is never clear where these locations are in relation to the city.

Some of the performances are at times bathetic. Personally I enjoyed Bruce Purchase' baroque, shouty performance as The Captain, but at times it does not entirely belong in the same scenes as the rest of the main cast. If ever a production needed a tone meeting it was 'The Pirate Planet', but tone meetings were not a thing back in the day.

I suppose Purchase could have adopted a less shouty performance. The Captain might have been made more menacing if Purchase had cleaved closer to the character's inspiration, 'Long John Silver' from Robert Louis Stevenson's much adapted *Treasure Island* (1883). Silver's parrot,

crutch and amputated leg had (with the addition of an eye-patch) established the stereotypical pirate in school children's imaginations. (This was, of course, before Johnny Depp chose to channel George Harrison as Captain Jack (Sparrow) in Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise).

Purchase rises to the comedic potential of the dialogue. He makes his scenes fun to watch and entirely memorable. And how could the following lines be delivered differently: "Mr Fibuli! Mr Fibuli! By all the X-Ray storms of Vega, where is that nincompoop?"; "Moons of madness! Why am I encumbered with incompetents?" and, of course, (on being shown a list of recently mined minerals): "Baubles! Baubles! Dross and baubles!"

The domestic scenes between Mula, played by Primi Townsend and her grandfather, Balaton, (Ralph Michael) are another matter.

"Mula: Grandfather, Pralix is very ill and all you can think about is what will happen if the neighbours hear.

Balaton: You know very well what will happen

Mula: Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

Balaton: Oh, Mula, don't spoil everything by asking so many questions..."

Some critics have argued that the performers' line delivery is appropriate because the scene is parodying similar kinds of scenes found in stereotypical, old time, sci-fi movies. That is as maybe, but 'The Pirate Planet' is not shot like a 'B-Movie' and there is no indication that the scenes should be read this way.

It may be that the lines are funnier on paper. The dialogue certainly reinforces The Captain's oppressive nature of The Captain's regime and the fact that the citizens are ignorant of the conditions under which their wealth is created. But as played, the scenes only exemplify the kind of flat performances that result from the exigencies of television production: too little time to rehearse or reshoot.

Some of the difficulties of tone arise from Adams's preferred sense of humour which, as Pope noted, is itself based on the sense of amusement produced by a sudden, unexpected fall from aspirational heights. Adams uses bathetic comedy throughout his work. This, from the opening narration for the 1975, BBC2 pilot of *Out of the Trees*:

'Narrator:...The Universe! A multitude of mighty galaxies! Within each galaxy a myriad of mighty star systems; within each star system a multiplicity of mighty planets and, in just one of these mighty planets, the mighty British Rail electric train.'

In 'The Pirate Planet', Romana's interactions with various characters provide Adams with plenty of opportunities for bathetic comedy.

Romana undercuts The Doctor's relationship with The TARDIS by describing it as an out-of-date, time capsule and as less interesting to her than "the lifecycle of the Gallifreyan flutterwing".

As The Doctor explains the difficulties of making contact with alien life to K9, Romana busies herself befriending the Town's citizens by using The Doctor's trademark packet of Jelly Babies.

“Doctor: Er, excuse me! I’d like to know where you got those Jelly Babies
Romana: The same place you got them
Doctor: Where?
Romana: Your pocket”

A difficulty with Adams’s use of bathetic comedy is that it tends to undermine science fiction’s sense of wonder. This is closely related to the idea of a conceptual breakthrough - such as moments when the world is shown to not be as it seems.

Science fiction is thought to mirror the conceptual breakthroughs achieved in the history of science. Again. Adams uses such moments for humour. The scene where Romana is admonished by the city guard for looking through a telescope is particularly clever in this respect, as it alludes to Galileo Galilei’s legendary telescope through which he observed the moons of Jupiter.

Galileo’s observations contributed to the Copernican Revolution, the conceptual breakthrough that The Earth orbited around the Sun for which Galileo was deemed a heretic by the Catholic Church (or so the story goes). The Doctor later jokes about explaining gravity to Sir Isaac Newton, another key figure in the history of science.

‘The Pirate Planet’ is not without ‘conceptual breakthroughs’, it is just that every moment of enlightenment is a rude awakening. Adams’s original name for ‘The Pirate Planet’ was ‘The Perfect Planet’, a title that would have set up the conceptual breakthrough that occurs when we learn Zanak’s utopian society is actually a dystopia, its wealth dependent on the deaths of

entire planets.

Adams’s bathetic comedy can be corrosive. ‘The Pirate Planet’ undermines the seriousness with which Doctor Who’s fans approach the series. By taking the programme seriously, fans are taking themselves seriously and warding off wider society’s negative evaluation of the programme and of themselves as fans.

In short, nothing says ‘am I a joke to you?’ than dialogue like:

“Romana (examining the controls on The Bridge): Doctor, I think this is the root of the trouble
Doctor: Micromat field integrator. Has the whizz-bang bong gone wrong?
Romana: Yes, and the ambi-cyclic photon bridge.”

‘The Pirate Planet’ has a serious side. It is easy to see ‘The Pirate Planet’ as evidence of Adams’s growing interest in environmentalism. The Pirate Captain plunders entire planets for their mineral riches, whilst casting most of their precious resources around Zanak’s streets. In this way, the planet’s population is bought off by jewels that are, in another context, mere “dross and baubles”. If The Pirate had a message, it would be, ‘don’t let the captains of industry steal our planet from under our feet’.



But Adams was not a political animal. His environmental activism was a far cry from today's protests by the Extinction Agenda movement. Instead, in 1994, during a money raising expedition to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, Adams wore a Rhino costume to publicise efforts to save the species from extinction.

As SF writer Adam Roberts notes, (in Salon on-line), what really mattered to Adams politically, was whatever would conserve the environment," If you read his books, "he's as likely to satirise the union-troubles of 1970s Labour as he is the rampant commercialisation of 1980s Thatcherism."

Still, as a Cambridge graduate, Adams was a member of an intellectual elite, together with the members of Monty Python's Flying Circus, which Adams sought to join. So, 'The Pirate Planet' is very much the view from The Bridge. Everyday life in Zanak is not well realised. In reality, diamonds only retain their value because of their artificially created scarcity. If they could be picked up off the streets, they would be worthless.

Precisely how The Captain's mining operations result in fine clothes and fine dining for the citizens is left unexplained. Also, since Calufrax is, according to The Doctor, devoid of life, what dying life force is being detected by The Mentiads?

Sometimes we must enact a different kind of bathetic descent by leaving the realm of Queens, Captains and (Time Lords), and turn away from producers, directors and (Time) Lords to provide a history of 'The Pirate Planet' from below.

Patrick Sullivan's website, 'Doctor Who: A Brief History of Time (Travel)', reports that production of the Pirate Planet "witnessed a recurrence of the labour unrest that had plagued the two preceding Doctor Who serials... this time, a dispute arose as to who was responsible for the operation of a caption scanner, and the resulting delays cascaded through the entire block"

A dispute over a caption scanner! An immediate reaction may be that no further evidence is needed that trade union members are pernickety jobsworths, ham-strung by such archaic and time-wasting practices as job demarcation - who was allowed to do what, when and where? But, job demarcation was not the invention of trade unions, but of managers in the shipbuilding industry because specifying particular roles made it easier to lay off workers once a particular job was completed.

From the point of view of those trade unionist who worked on 'The Pirate Planet', Zanak could represent a vampire economy, a 'Marxferatu', which "lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks."

So, mining the story of 'The Pirate Planet's workforce, might produce another kind of conceptual breakthrough, one that allows us to see Doctor Who as a social production and, more importantly, lead us to conclude that we are all living under a pirate planet.



THE STONES OF BLOOD

Review by Simon Painter

I'm not sure whether or not this is a controversial opinion, but I really like 'The Stones of Blood', even though I have to admit that it's a disappointing, half-baked, under-developed mess with tone shifts so radical and sharp you could hurt yourself on them. Let me explain...

First off, the first episode is amongst the best in the series' history. Gothic moors at night, pagan blood sacrifices awakening stone monsters whose stone hearts can be heard beating as the blood is poured onto them, a sinister local landowner that seems to know who the Doctor is, eccentric local academics and the literal cliffhanger in which an eerily unseen Doctor appears to push Romana to her death. That's an incredible bit of writing and exactly the sort of thing I'd expect from the best of the mid-70s stories. It is almost an

echo of the much-missed Phillip Hinchliffe era. I would love to see what Hinchliffe would have accomplished with this story as raw material.

Sadly, each subsequent episode is more disappointing than the last. Part Two fails to build on the tension contained in the first. The sinister landowner that seem to know who the Doctor is? Unceremoniously killed off, and the mystery is never resolved. The terrifying rock monsters? They do not honestly look anywhere near so good, shuffling slowly around in the light of day. The mystery of the secret identity of the Celtic goddess? Don't expect to be kept waiting in suspense for long before all is revealed.

Part Three even takes away the lovely, gothic, Cornish setting, and whisks us off to a brightly-lit spaceship, further



reducing the tension. Part Four is the nadir of the whole story, in which nearly all interest in the horror elements are forgotten and it becomes a more than slightly bizarre courtroom drama with twinkly Christmas lights for judges. I really did not make that last bit up. That is what actually happens.

The story is resolved quickly and rather off-handedly. The villain feels spectacularly unthreatening, sitting patiently while the Doctor's court case proceeds. It is made clear repeatedly that the Ogrs are no real physical threat in this setting. Be honest now, the final defeat of the villain coming because the Megara are convinced that they should scan her memories in case she is suffering from brain damage after falling over does not make a single bit of logical sense. It is almost as if the writer had simply given up at this point and just needed a quick resolution.

There are also so many unanswered questions:

How did the cult leader in Part One know who the Doctor is? Was he an agent of the Black Guardian? Is Cessair of Diplos? The Doctor is warned to beware the Black Guardian, but if he makes his presence known in this episode I have failed to spot it.

Why should the Doctor "Beware the Black Guardian"? He doesn't appear to be present anywhere in this story. Later revelations (spoilers!) in 'The Armageddon Factor' suggest that the Doctor's quest may even have been orchestrated by the Black Guardian, who is waiting patiently near the final segment the first five to be delivered to him. Why then is this warning delivered? There is no more threat here than on any of the first five stories of this season. In terms of story-telling, I can only suppose it exists to prompt the Doctor



to explain the true nature of the quest to Romana – who until now had been unaware that she was not on a mission from the Lord President of Gallifrey.

What was Cessair's plan? Was it to literally hide out in Cornwall for eternity, occasionally assisting local academics with their field work for eternity? If it weren't for the blood sacrifices there's nearly no reason for the Doctor to get involved at all. The fact that "Vivien" and Professor Rumford appear to be genuine friends could be a great source of dramatic tension after Vivien is revealed as the villain. Like a lot of classic Doctor Who though, the story is almost entirely concerned with plot. The inner lives of the characters are of precious little interest to the writer. As a consequence, the two former friends share only a line or so of dialogue after Part Two.

Come to think of it, why is she posing as a Celtic goddess? It could be to ensure a regular supply of blood for the Ogri, which she is using as a pack of stone watchdogs. Surely there are easier, less convoluted methods to obtain blood, though? Perhaps she hates the work that would otherwise be involved getting it herself, and she is outsourcing to the local community?

Why is she silver suddenly in Part Three? I've spent a lot of time pondering over this, far longer than it really deserves. My best guess is that she is actually silver (perhaps even a silicon-based life-form like the Ogri, hence their natural affinity for each other) and used the power of the third segment of the Key to Time to transform herself into the appearance of one of the Earth locals. I can almost leave it there, ex-

cept that Professor Rumford sees her in her groovy, silver look and shows no surprise at all. Would you not be at least a little curious if one of your closest friends turned up suddenly painted head to foot in silver bodypaint? I would.

I suspect the reason for that lack of curiosity is that nothing of the sort is in the script, and very likely was not the writers intention. My theory is that the make-up artist had been itching for simply ages to try out a really wild make-up look, and here her chance was finally come!

My personal head canon is that Professor Rumford and Vivien/Cessair are such close friends that the Professor is aware of Vivien's "skin problem" and believes she's covering it up with ordinary make-up.

I know the Key to Time season arc is often pretty light, but that's especially true here. If I were to edit out the first and last scene, I don't think you'd ever really know this story was part of a larger epic. It would not surprise me if it were to turn out that the story was written long before the Key to Time concept had been dreamed up.

Come to think of it, I also would not be surprised if this story were several different unfinished scripts jammed unceremoniously together.

With all of these many, many issues, why is it I like this story so much?

For a start there are the performances. Everyone is on full form in this story. It is one of the great crimes of classic Doctor Who that Professor Rumford

did not become a recurring character. She is absolutely amazing, and even if she were in every episode of the classic series from this point on I still would not get bored of her.

Tom Baker himself is full of his usual eccentric acting choices. One of my favourites is early in the story, where he's trying to determine whether a pot of crystals are the ones he is after or not, which he does by first tasting them, and then by putting the pot to his ear like a sea-shell and listening to them. Also, the moment in the trial scene where the Doctor suddenly whips out a barrister's wig and wears it for most of the episode is fantastic. It strikes an entirely discordant note with the gothic horror of the first two episodes, but at this point who really cares any more?

I also love Susan Engel's ambiguously sinister performance as Vivien Fay. She is sadly given very little material to work with once she has become silver, although the moment towards the end of Part Three where she breaks the fourth wall and gives all of us at home an evil glare is a wonderful, and bonkers moment. I love it.

If I have a criticism of the use of the characters in the story, it is that Romana appears to be somewhat superfluous. She serves as a damsel in distress for 2 of the 3 cliffhangers, but the secondary leads for most of the rest of the story are the double act of Professor Rumford and K9. Those two are admittedly more interesting characters, but it is a shame that the writer could not think of anything much else for Romana to do that actually moved the story forward.

The Cornish setting of the early episodes is terrific while it lasts, even if it is entirely squandered by the end of the story.

What I honestly like the most about this story is the sheer disregard it has for any consistency of tone or content. You think this is a gothic horror? Think again! Ah, then it is a quiet mystery story set in a tiny village? Nope. An SF courtroom drama? Well, it is all of these things, while also not being any of them at the same time. It is a wild story that flips and flops from place to place, genre to genre and seems to show no awareness of just how utterly crackers it really is.

Ask yourself though – what other TV series could ever have produced something like this? Even RTD with his shopping lists of mad things to throw into an episode of the new series would never dream of including such incompatible elements as this story does.

This is not one of those stories that more sensibly picks one theme and tries to do it perfectly. This one picks half a dozen, throws the blender and asks what you think of the multi-coloured mess in front of you.

And, do you know what? I love it. It is different. There are few things like it anywhere else in the world, but nowhere can it ever be said that this story is dull. It does not stay in one place long enough for us to get bored of anything.

If you enjoy the first episode of 'The Stones of Blood' – and I suspect you would do – then try listening to the Big Finish audio, 'The Spectre of Lanyon

Moore'. That is pretty much what this story would be if it maintained the gothic tone and did not pivot wildly and often. There is even a character in it whose name is taken from a stray line of dialog in this story. Also, the Brigadier is in it, never a bad thing. It's a well-written, sensible, atmospheric story that stays true to what it sets out to do.

But...does it have trials on space ships, silver-painted villains and completely impractical stone pillars for monsters? No, it does not. There is only one story anywhere in the world with the audacity to throw things like that into the mix!

When watching flawed stories like this, I often like to ponder what could have been done to save it. The obvious is to take out the space ship sequences from the last two episodes. That, or make the spaceship as dark and forbidding a location as the Cornish moors.

I would have made at least one character an active agent of the Black Guardian. Perhaps the head man of the cult? Reveal him as a third party posing as a loyal cultist, but in reality is trying to get close to Vivien/Cessair to obtain the segment for his true master.

Add some complexity to Cessair. I love the idea of a villain that doesn't have an evil masterplan, that is not trying to rule the world. I would love it if she simply were lying low, living a quiet village life, and indulging her interest in archaeology. The arrival of two rival claimants for her prized necklace that allows her to live on Earth undetected

would make her desperate and willing to lash out to save herself.

I do not think there is any need to raise the stakes. Not every villain is planning to raise an evil army to take over the world. The stakes in this story could be entirely personal. The Doctor's quest means the end of Vivien's long, peaceful life on Earth. It could end with her bidding Professor Rumford a tearful farewell as she is forced to leave, or is killed by agents of the Black Guardian, or whatever.

This stuff almost writes itself, does it not?

Do not base your expectations for 'The Stones of Blood' on Part One. Treat it as a wild ride, following the mercurial whims of a writer that should probably drink perhaps a little less coffee while working. It is a fun ride, and you would never in a million years predict where you would finish up based on where you started.

Do make sure you fasten your seatbelt before you start...



THE ANDROIDS OF TARA

Review by Stephen Hatcher

Season 16 of Doctor Who is indeed a season full of treats; of the six stories that make up the 'Key to Time' arc, four are among my favourite stories of the 70s and rank highly among my favourites of all time, and the remaining two are by no means 'bad' stories. However, while the attractions of *The Ribos Operation*, *'The Pirate Planet'* and *'The Stones of Blood'* are compelling, it is to the fifth story of the season, *'The Androids of Tara'* by David Fisher that I turn if I feel the need of a little fix of the Fourth Doctor and the first Romana.

The great and much missed Terrance Dicks was wont to remark that what you needed in order to write a strong Doctor Who tale, was a good, original story. "But, you see," he would continue, "it doesn't have to be your good original story." This is a truism that has served Doctor Who well, over the years, with some of the strongest and most popular examples of the show being based on, inspired by, paying homage to, or just plain ripped off from classic literary sources, be they books or films.

One only has to scratch the surface of *'The Brain of Morbius'* to see the bones of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* showing through; *'Planet of Evil'* owes more than a little to the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet* (which itself owes a huge debt to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*); and *'The Talons of Weng Chiang'* steers worryingly close to Sax Rohmer's blatantly sinophobic *Fu Manchu* stories, uncomfortable though this is to modern sensi-

bilities. In modern times, the 2010 Christmas Special, *'A Christmas Carol'* is clearly a close relation of the Charles Dickens novella of the same title.

Perhaps the Doctor Who story that remains closest to its source material is *'The Androids of Tara'*. Indeed, David Fisher's first submission for what was to become the story, bore the title *'The Androids of Zenda'*. If we hadn't already worked out the story's origins, that might just have been a clue.

Over the past fifty years the classics of children's and family literature seem to have faded somewhat from the public consciousness, but when I was growing up in the 60s and 70s, those Victorian and Edwardian tales of derring-do, often the product of a deeply jingoistic imperialism, were very much a staple of the young person's literary diet. It was by no means unusual for boys and girls of the period to have read books such as Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, and Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, as well as the novels of Charles Dickens, at least in abridged and illustrated form. Of course, these stories were further embedded in the pantheon by the numerous movie adaptations of them that had appeared over many years, which were staples of the TV schedules. From the late 50s, the BBC began broadcasting adaptations of many of these stories as part of the Sunday Classic Serials strand. The 1894 novel, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and its 1898 sequel *Rupert of Hentzau* were

both very much a part of that 'required reading list' of the time – stories with which people would have been familiar.

Written by Marlborough and Oxford educated former barrister turned novelist and playwright Anthony Hope Hawkins, who wrote under the name Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda* sees English gentleman Rudolf Rassendyll, holidaying in the fictional kingdom of Ruritania and becoming embroiled in a plot to overthrow the new king Rudolf V, his distant relative, who resembles him remarkably closely.

The King has been drugged and incapacitated on the orders of his younger half-brother, Duke Michael, to prevent him from attending his coronation, and so give Michael a pretext to seize the throne. The King's loyal advisors, Colonel Sapt and Fritz von Tarlenheim, persuade Rassendyll to impersonate the King and be crowned in his place, Duke

Michael and his confederates kidnap the real King, and are astonished to see the coronation go ahead, apparently with the King in place. Aware of the deception, but unable to reveal it without exposing their own conspiracy, they attempt both to bribe Rassendyll to leave the country and to murder him. Meanwhile Rassendyll meets the Princess Flavia, who is due to marry King Rudolf and become queen. Inconveniently, Rassendyll and Flavia fall in love.

Michael's mistress, Antoinette de Mauban, aware that if the Duke's plan succeeds and he becomes King, he will cement his position by marrying the popular Princess Flavia, reveals to Rassendyll and Sapt that the King is being held in Zenda Castle, and they discover that he is dangerously ill. Time is short. Rassendyll and Sapt lead a small team of hand-picked men to rescue the King, overcoming Michael and his henchmen, including the fearsome Rupert of



Hentzau, in the process, although Hentzau escapes to become the focus of the sequel novel. The rightful King is restored to the throne and the two lovers, Rassendyll and Flavia, bound by duty and honour, have to part.

It's a fabulous story of adventure, which was initially adapted as a stage play in New York as early as 1895, transferring to London the following year. The novel came unsurprisingly quickly to the attention of the infant film industry, with the first movie adaptation, starring James K. Hackett and directed by Hugh Ford and Edwin S. Porter, appearing in 1913. Two more versions appeared in the silent era, in 1915 and 1922.

It was another fifteen years before the next adaptation of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, but the wait proved worthwhile. The 1937 film is an all-star, full-scale Hollywood spectacular, which Halliwell's Film Guide 2008 described as "One of the most entertaining films to come out of Hollywood". Ronald Colman plays Rassendyll and King Rudolf, with Madeleine Carroll as Flavia, Raymond Massey as Michael, former England cricket captain Sir C. Aubrey Smith as Sapt, and David Niven as Fritz von Tarlenheim; but the film is absolutely stolen by Douglas Fairbanks Junior, in a typically swashbuckling performance as the wicked Rupert of Hentzau. The film was a great critical and commercial success, which further cemented the position of the novel in the popular consciousness.

The 1952 remake, starring Stewart Granger, Deborah Kerr and James Mason was little more than a shot-for-shot remake of the 1937 film, albeit in glorious Technicolor. Despite the charisma

of the three stars, it is not regarded as highly as the earlier version. Both the Ronald Colman and the Stewart Granger versions regularly featured in TV schedules throughout the 1960s and 70s.

Setting aside two 1960s Bengali language versions, a 2015 loose Bollywood adaptation and a 2012 Korean film; the most recent appearance of *The Prisoner of Zenda* in cinemas came just five months after the broadcast of 'The Androids of Tara', in May 1979, in the form of a comedy, adapted extremely loosely from Hope's novel by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. The film was a vehicle for the talents of Peter Sellers, who played the triple role of Rassendyll, King Rudolf and the old King, and also starred Lynne Frederick, Lionel Jeffries, Elke Sommer, Jeremy Kemp and Catherine Schell. As with many of Sellers' later films, it was met with a decidedly mixed reaction from critics and was not a box-office success. It comes as something of a surprise to discover that the first television adaptation of *The Prisoner of Zenda* did not arrive until a full six years after 'The Androids of Tara', with the 1984 BBC Classic Serial version of the story. It's a programme which has a lot of interest for Doctor Who fans. It was produced by Barry Letts and script-edited by Terrance Dicks, with costumes by Ken Trew. The cast is full of familiar faces, including John Woodvine, Jonathan Morris and Victoria Wicks. Malcolm Sinclair plays the two Rudolfs and Pauline Moran is Antoinette. From memory, it was an engaging and enjoyable production, but sadly it has never been released on DVD, nor made available on a streaming service in the UK.

When David Fisher came to pitch his take on *The Prisoner of Zenda* to the Doctor Who production office, they must have been confident that it would be a story familiar to viewers.

It may seem an odd claim to make, given that we're discussing a 1978 science-fiction version of an 1894 novel, featuring a couple of time-travelling aliens and their robot dog, not to mention the titular androids, but 'The Androids of Tara' is actually a remarkably faithful adaptation of Anthony Hope's story - at least as faithful, if not more so, than the Peter Sellers film.

All the main plot beats are present - the drugging and kidnap of the King, the coronation, the unexpected help from the mistress of the enemy, the attack on the castle - they're all there. The biggest plot change is, of course, the introduction of the androids - near perfect duplicates of (importantly) Prince Reynart, Princess Strella and Romana, created by Count Grendel's android engineer Lamia, as a slightly confusing aspect to the villain's plans. Given that his scheme involves preventing Reynart from attending his coronation - which doesn't require any android involvement, I'm not entirely clear where the robot-men fit in. Let's not even think about how a clearly pre-industrial, feudal society is able even to produce the materials to construct androids, never mind have the technological ability to make them.

The characters too remain - although the names are changed. The Doctor and Romana share the Rassendyll role, with Romana bearing a strong resemblance to Princess Flavia - or Strella, as she is now renamed - rather than, let's say,

the Doctor impersonating the King. The two main villains of the book - Duke Michael and Rupert of Hentzau - are economically combined to great effect in the person of Count Grendel; King Rudolf becomes Prince Reynart; Antoinette is Lamia, the android-maker; and Zadek and Farrah replace Sapt and von Tarlenheim.

Apart from those mostly superficial changes, the 'good original story' that David Fisher is telling in 'The Androids of Tara', is a very thinly disguised version of Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*. And my, what a 'good original story' that is.

If that great classic story weren't enough to guarantee the quality of 'The Androids of Tara', the production is blessed with a terrific cast too. Tom Baker is enjoying a real renaissance as the Doctor, at this point in his run, recapturing much of the mercurial magic of his performance during Seasons 12 to 14. There were times during the previous year, when the frustrations of production seemed to be getting to him, resulting in performances that were sometimes, by Baker's standards, a little flat. In Season 16, he is clearly relishing his new partnership with Mary Tamm as Romana and enjoying the op-



portunity to play with a succession of strong scripts. The structure of the story leaves Mary Tamm herself with a very particular challenge, requiring her to play not only Romana and her doppehgänger Princess Strella, but also the android doubles of each of them – four separate roles. Tamm rises to that challenge with aplomb, distinguishing each of the roles exceptionally well.

The main guest stars are Peter Jeffrey as the villainous Count Grendel and Neville Jason in the dual role of Prince Reynart and his android double. Jason, was an experienced and accomplished actor, at the time perhaps best known for playing the role of police inspector Lapointe in the BBC's *Maigret* (1960-63). He wins our sympathy as Reynart the prisoner of duty, as well as of Grendel, bringing a long-suffering dignity to the prince. Peter Jeffrey, in his second *Doctor Who* story (following 'The Macra Terror', 1967), is simply superb as

Grendel. Spitting villainous venom over every scene, he brings a real menace to proceedings. He emulates Douglas Fairbanks Jr. in turning the villain Rupert of Hentzau (Grendel) into the hero of the show. Strong support also comes from Simon Lack and Paul Lavers as Zadek and Farrah, and especially from Lois Baxter as Lamia. Any sightings of Declan 'almost Jabba the Hutt' Mulholland, here playing Grendel's servant Till, and especially the always terrific Cyril Shaps as the Archimandrite – together with his wonderful comedy hat – are a welcome addition to any production.

So, 'The Androids of Tara' – for my money, the strongest story in a season of strong stories, with a great cast and a terrific script, which shamelessly 'pays homage to' one of the best adventure novels of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and an immensely entertaining Hollywood film. You just need 'a good original story' indeed.



THE POWER OF KROLL

Review by Tim Gambrell

I have often wondered why 'The Power of Kroll' is not more highly regarded within fandom. It is beautifully shot, mostly on location. It has a strong cast, it tells an engaging story and Kroll itself is far more effectively realised than a lot of other enormous monsters from the same period.

However, enter the 'but': the story is not well-liked.

As fans we are very good at absorbing production information and allowing that to colour our appreciation. I suspect that may be a contributing factor here. We are told, for example, that none of the cast particularly enjoyed making the story. Philip Madoc (or his agent) was mistaken about the character he was going to play, which did not help. The Swampy actors did not like the green body paint and it wouldn't wash off properly. Someone internally at the BBC complained about the shoddy design work on display in Part Four. The anecdotes are all negative and none of them have a redeeming punchline.

Further, Kroll is the only story in Season 16 not to feature any guest female roles – not even amongst the chanting Swampy extras. Coming, as it does, after a run of stories with strong female characters, this inequality becomes more noticeable than it would have been back in the Hinchcliffe Era when such casting and character decisions were more often the norm. I'm not sug-

gesting that this in itself should or does make anyone dislike 'The Power of Kroll', but it is another perceived negative to add to the collection.

The viewing public at the time appeared to love it. Part Two got the highest viewing figure for the season. This included four-and-a-half-year-old me. Am I burdened with rose-tinted spectacles? Perhaps, although I think enough time has passed now for me to be able to assess the story with reasonably cold temperance. And whilst it is by no means perfect, I think it does very well.

The Robert Holmes Factor is an immediate draw for the story. He really could write for the Fourth Doctor like no one else. The script sizzles in all the right places. It has nearly all of Holmes' hallmarks: violence (or the threat of it, at least), misery, a clear social structure, and just the right amount of humour. The script is, however, played uncharacteristically straight for the period of the programme. In the main, it is only the Doctor and Romana who are given lighter moments.

Perhaps that is part of the issue? I have read criticisms dismissing the opening scene as an over-long info-dump. But it introduces the refinery characters, their relationships and the prevailing attitude towards the Swampies (particularly from Thawn and Harg). It subtly tells us a bit about each of them and gives the viewer some background to the story.

That's what studio-based TV drama did at the time. And the story does not hang around. The Doctor and Romana are quickly separated shortly after the TARDIS lands, helping to spread the narrative focus and introduce us to the Swampies and Rohm-Dutt.

I think perhaps the negative perception comes back to the story being played straight and without much in the way of eccentricity. The first two episodes of 'The Stones of Blood' are often highlighted as the closest that the Williams Era got to the tone of the Hinchcliffe Era after 'Image of the Fendahl'. I'd argue 'The Power of Kroll' fits that label, too. It is delivered with the same level of sober integrity as 'Planet of Evil'.

I have also seen the refinery characters dismissed simply as 'dull'. Agreed, they don't have the kind of duplicitous or antagonistic relationships we saw amongst the crew in 'The Robots of Death', for example, but also that's not

necessary for the story being told here. Any excessive drama between the refinery crew would be a needless distraction.

Maybe the judgment is more about the scheduling of Kroll? The story comes at the end of a period of very strong Robert Holmes scripts, featuring larger-than-life characters. It also comes after a series of very strong scripts in Season 16, again featuring larger-than-life characters. There's no one in Kroll like Henry Gordon Jago, or Gatherer Hade, or Garron. There's also no one in Kroll like the Pirate Captain, or Amelia Rumford, or Count Grendel. And there's no Holmesian double act either, which was something he had rather made his calling card of late.

These are the straw man aspects that fans usually cling to, on which they build their appreciation of a Robert Holmes story, or a Season 16 story. And in Kroll they are missing. But is that

a worthwhile argument to damn the story? I don't believe so. It means that Kroll defies expectations in many ways. Perhaps we, as viewers and fans, have to set aside our preconceptions and open our eyes and ears a little more to appreciate the positives. Because there is



still plenty to recommend this story.

'The Power of Kroll' is the first story in which K9 has not featured since 'Image of the Fendahl'. I am not saying that is a positive per se, but it is a timely reminder that the character is a tool, and not all tools are suitable for all occasions. It would not have helped the underlying racial message, for example, to have K9 blasting Swampies in order to try to rescue Romana at the start of Part Two.

The other positive to K9 not being in the story is that, since he was already under contract, it gave John Leeson the opportunity to appear on screen for a change. All credit to him as Dugeen. The character is often the underplayed counterpoint to Thawn's malicious excesses. Dugeen subtly and naturally drops hints about being sympathetic to the Swampies' plight without making any big statements. Then when the Swampies are actually endangered and his hand is forced in Part Four, Dugeen steps up to the mark perfectly. I'd argue that Dugeen is probably the most interesting of the refinery crew, and John Leeson's mannered, nuanced performance is very much a part of that.

Dugeen is probably the refinery character with the most clearly defined journey in the story, although Thawn's sanity is questionable by the time he gets his just desserts (and with a surprising amount of blood on display, too). Philip Madoc has said that Fenner lacked a journey – the character did not seem to go anywhere in the story, or be going anywhere with his life. It is to Madoc's enormous credit, then, that in the viewer's eyes Fenner does progress through the story. You can see him questioning his own actions and those of Thawn,

even as he undertakes tasks of which he clearly disapproves. It is because of the way he measures up the situation that he is the one left alive at the end – left alive and probably about to make his fortune on Delta Magna thanks to the Doctor's casual mention of a plasmin catalyst.

Madoc topped and tailed his TV Doctor Who appearances with Robert Holmes scripts. Personally, I think Eelek in 'The Krotons' was more of a one-note character than Fenner in 'The Power of Kroll'. Eelek was reactionary, out for self-interest only, and ended up nowhere. Fenner is an observer who plays the odds, holds his counsel, and is a natural survivor.

The same could not be said of gunrunner Rohm-Dutt, although it should come naturally to someone who operates on the wrong side of the law. Writing another morally ambiguous or unsavoury character for Season 16, Holmes is careful not to retread characters from 'The Ribos Operation (even if the name Kroll was!) In contrast to Iain Cuthbertson's excesses as Garron, Glynn Owen gives Rohm-Dutt a fallible, slightly nervous edge. He only perceives the Swampies as a threat, ignoring the fact that the information he has on Neil McCarthy's snarling Thawn might bring him into greater danger. If this needed to be a six-part story, there would have been mileage in a harder-edged Rohm-Dutt (more like Stotz in 'The Caves of Androzani') stalking the marshes, seeking his revenge on Thawn.

Rohm-Dutt may have been naïve enough not to see that he was being played, but the viewer is not. We don't

believe for a moment that the Sons of Earth have armed the Swampies. In fact, apart from the suggestion at the beginning that the Doctor might (and indeed does) get mistaken for Rohm-Dutt, there's no real attempt to conceal the fact that Thawn planned the whole thing. And neither does there need to be. The viewer can be ahead of the narrative in that respect without it impacting on the drama as it unfolds.

The ethnic cleansing metaphor is strong throughout and in particular Thawn's attitude towards Mensch on the refinery is utterly repellent. The Swampies have already been uprooted and moved wholesale, by human settlers, from their home world of Delta Magna to a 'sanctuary' on one of its moons. Now, hundreds of years later, the invading white man perceives them to be an obstruction on the moon as well. The plight of Native Americans springs immediately to mind, but it is a shameful pattern that was repeated all over our world.

The Doctor's tacit acceptance that the Swampies are all right on the moon sits a little uncomfortably. There's no righteous indignation over them being uprooted in the first place. Despite their treatment of him the Doctor still fights for their right to the lands they've been given. But what sits less comfortably than any of this is the derogatory name 'Swampy'. If the story was written now, there would be at least a passing corrective reference to them as indigenous or aboriginal Delta Magnans. Or, more likely, they would have their own name in their own tongue. 'Swampies' clearly denotes their relationship with the marshlands – nominative determinism, plain and simple. But it is impossible not

to see it as a dismissive, pejorative label, instead of a race or species name.

There are, thankfully, some positives to be drawn from the Swampies' story. They have a clearly defined heritage and history, which is not always the case on Doctor Who. Giving three of them voice promotes more than just basic conversation. Ranquin, Scart, and Varlik all take slightly differing stances on matters of discussion. They reason and debate and grow, giving the lie to Thawn's view of them as 'ignorant savages'. Ranquin represents the old superstitious ways. Scart sits on the fence. Varlik is the questioning voice of reason and progress. Ranquin's passive faith can only lead him one way. But Varlik has a journey of discovery and understanding that takes him beyond that, to whatever the future may hold. And what is empowering about this is that the Swampies deliberate these points themselves. It does not require the patronising input or influence of a supervising, well-intentioned 'white missionary-type' to educate them or open their minds to new concepts.

What also helps sell the Swampies' culture is that the moon of Delta Magna is very effectively realised through some wonderful location filming – and even night shooting for extra atmosphere and impact. Like Leeds Castle in the preceding story, 'The Androids of Tara', the location work gives the production a sense of scale and freedom that other stories of that era lacked (in particular the following story, 'The Armageddon Factor'). It helps make the story less theatrical and really sells the action to the viewer.

Having said that, you can't deny there was some dodgy scaling going on with

the model filming when Kroll sits on the refinery toward the end. And the Kroll we see does not quite match the Kroll that Dugeen describes, with at least thirty tentacles on one side alone. But I am inclined to be generous. I have to suspend my disbelief for a lot of old TV I watch and this is no different. It is not great, but it is also not quite bad enough to drag me out of the moment. The split screen shots of Kroll emerging in the marshes are really effective. We're never too sure precisely what's going on with the tentacles snaking along and grabbing people, but again, it is not enough to drag me out of the moment. The same with the Part Two cliffhanger where Harg gets dragged into the pipeline. This is one I vividly recall from the original broadcast and I don't think it has lost any of its impact after forty-five years.

As with much of Season 16, finding the Key to Time segment quickly becomes secondary to whatever situation the TARDIS team find themselves embroiled in. After a brief spell at the start of the story, neither the Doctor nor Romana appear to be concerned with finding the segment or evening working out what it is. However, by this point regular viewers are savvy enough to spot the red flags – almost like the programme is playing a game with us. As soon as it is mentioned it is clear to the viewer that the Swampy High Priest's symbol of power, swallowed by Kroll, is going to be the segment. If the format of the show prevents it from constantly focusing on the Key to Time (and it does somewhat work against such a story arc concept) it can nevertheless be rewarding to

regular viewers to spot or guess what the segment might be before the Doctor or Romana either work it out or reveal they knew the answer all along.

The Key to Time story arc may not be prominent for much of the narrative of 'The Power of Kroll', but it remains intrinsic to the story. Without it, we would not have the resolution we do. And it would be a lot less satisfying if the story ended up retreading 'The Seeds of Doom' and needing to blow the creature up, for example.

'The Power of Kroll' is not highly regarded within fandom. Neither is it highly regarded within Season 16, nor within the Graham Williams Era as a whole. And I am not arguing that it should be up there with 'Horror of Fang Rock' or 'City of Death', for example. But I do think it is unfairly maligned, considering its effective visuals and memorable moments. It tells a good story and is fully integrated within the Key to Time story arc. Therefore, it does what it sets out to do. It can only be down to the individual viewer to decide whether it does it well or not.



THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR

Review by Richard D. Carrier

Anyone familiar with my video reviews will be aware that when discussing Doctor Who I incline toward a focus on the positives rather than jump on band-wagons of negativity, but pulling the short straw with 'The Armageddon Factor' has certainly tested my proclivity for praise.

It is a story of lasts. The last story of season sixteen; the last six-part classic Doctor Who (not including the unfinished 'Shada'); the last to feature Mary Tamm's Romana; the last instalment of the Key to Time story arc; the last to be co-written by K9 creators Bob Baker and Dave Martin; the last to be script-edited by Anthony Read... and, at times, it feels a little like a last effort by an exhausted production crew.

Coming at the fag-end of a late seventies season certainly stacks the cards against the story. With inflation skyrocketing to levels approaching the unprecedented peak of the middle of the decade, budgets that had been set earlier in the year would not stretch as far as had been planned by the time production began on later stories. Add to the mix what seemed like constant industrial action and it's a wonder any British television got made. Such difficulties had already doomed 'Underworld' to a reliance on CSO sets long before the technology was advanced enough to pull such digital trickery off convincingly, and had seen an abandoned hospital stand in for the labyrinthine interior of the TARDIS in

The Invasion of Time, both in the previous season. At least 'The Armageddon Factor' doesn't suffer such egregious woes, but the story does suffer from issues that go beyond the superficial.

There is a lot of good stuff here, however. The premise of Atrios continuing to prosecute a nuclear war in search of a hollow victory over the villainous Zeons after the entire surface of the planet has been reduced to radioactive waste, their last remaining forces sheltering in a crumbling bunker whilst the blandest propaganda plays unwatched on hospital screens, makes for an arresting opening.

John Woodvine, as the Marshal (potentially the real villain of the piece), effectively conveys a man on the edge of madness, his single-minded obsession and pursuit of 'victory' at all costs rendering him blind to the suffering and ultimate pointlessness of continuing the war. With his bombastic pronouncements yet obvious impotence, Woodvine channels Shakespeare's Richard II, an autocrat who is slowly losing the confidence of his subordinates as he appears to mutter to himself in the corner of his command centre. With Davyd Harries' Shapp providing a more understated counterpoint, wryly lifting an eyebrow with camp abandon at the theatrics of his superior, we have a recipe for an effective comedy duo.

But these aspects exemplify the prob-

lem at the heart of the story: none are developed to any satisfactory conclusion. Shapp accidentally transmats himself to another planet, leaving bored-sounding underlings to take up the straight man routine while he executes some pratfalls in the face of enemy fire. The Marshal is never overthrown by a more worthy leader à la Richard II, nor is he consumed by a destruction of his own making after repeatedly ordering his lackey to "Fire!". Surely, this would make for a more poetic end than just being released to return to his people and continue as a war leader with no war left to fight, none of which we actually see but rather are told about?

The propaganda film that starts the story, insipid and twee, is immediately contrasted with the 'real life' romance of Merak and Astra, a Romeo and Juliet analogue, but, perhaps, one that offered an opportunity to transform the civilisation of Atrios into one of peace and

reconciliation as the loving couple take up the reins of government after the authoritarian rule of the Marshal. Instead, our Romeo wanders the corridors of Zeos being consecutively tricked by a projection of his love, then manipulated and abandoned by her Shadow-controlled persona, before ending up back on Atrios just in time to wake in a hospital bed to greet her restored self so that they can carry on their tryst with very little change to the status quo.

And then there is 'Mentalis', the computer brain at the heart of the Zeon war effort, standing in for the now extinct inhabitants of that planet, a logical strategist that has outwitted the Marshal at every turn and is programmed to assure mutual destruction of both planets upon the conclusion of the war. This is, surely, a missed opportunity to have the Marshal confront the ultimate result of his own thinking: the inhuman



desire for victory at all costs, the realisation that he has been playing a game in which no side can ultimately win. But no, he never becomes aware of it, as far as we know, even after he returns to Atrios, presumably a bit confused by how he managed to blow up a completely different target to the one at which he was aiming.

Instead, by Part Three, the promising threads laid down in the early episodes are slowly abandoned as we pivot to the need to work in the Key to Time and introduce the (surely) real villain of the piece, the Shadow. Who he is and where he comes from seems irrelevant to the need to position him as a stereotypical villain of the 'nyah-hah-hah' variety with very little motivation beyond the destruction of seemingly everything in the universe for his own enjoyment. Apparently humanoid, is that skull mask part of his physiognomy, or is it some kind of costume aimed at intimidating others? It would certainly explain how he manages to ladder the tights he has got stretched over his leering face.

He and his sinister 'mutes' have been working as a fifth column, manipulating the war to trap the Doctor and come into possession of the elusive sixth segment. However, in what was presumably an attempt to emphasise his almighty power, the Shadow seems glued to his rocky seat for the majority of the story, preferring to express his confidence in ultimate victory even though pretty much everything he does is illogical, inconsistent and doesn't really make any sense. One would think that having had Mentalis programmed to self-destruct in a way that will annihilate both Atrios and Zeos, and therefore, presumably, the Shadow's so-

called 'Planet of Evil' between the two, would give him enough cause to get off his backside when that very course of action is underway, but no, he seems rather unfazed by the whole thing.

The big twist is, of course, that Astra herself is the sixth segment, something of which the Shadow is unaware and then, inexplicably, later does know, when the other segments come into his possession. Even then, he is so confident in his victory that he spends such an inordinate amount of time in the process of removing the tracer from the Key to Time that the Doctor has sufficient opportunity to exit K9 (who is acting as a Trojan Horse in a script by the Greek myth obsessed Baker and Martin), return himself to full size, and snatch it from straight under his... nasal bone.

Unlike many six-parters earlier in the history of the show, where stories are stretched beyond breaking point in the need to fill those six twenty-five-minute instalments, 'The Armageddon Factor' suffers more from having too much story potential and still resorting to padding with running down corridors (or through caves) and even interminably repeated footage to really ram home the idea of the time loop and its slow decay.

A case in point is the character of Drax, introduced at just the point where the previously promising characters of both the Marshal and Astra have been rendered somewhat superfluous. This Time Lord classmate of the Doctor is ably brought to life by Barry Jackson, his 'bit weerrr, bit weeeey' schtick predating dodgy dealer Del Boy by almost two years, but his underdeveloped charac-

ter serves merely to continue Baker and Martin's seeming agenda to undermine any gravitas or superiority the Time Lords might once have had. Indeed, the revelation that the Doctor's name is 'Theta Sigma' is thrown in with such abandon and lack of any sense of importance that fans almost immediately had to retcon it into being a nickname until 1988's 'The Happiness Patrol' finally took the opportunity to canonically lay such irreverence for one of the central conceits of the show to rest.

After an initial entertaining to-and-fro between Drax and the Doctor, the potential of having another rogue Time Lord added to the mix is squandered, leaving Drax to essentially fill the audience in on the fates of the supporting cast and propose a future destiny for Atrios which we never see. By this point, however, it's time for the real (for definite this time) villain of the piece to show up: the Black Guardian.

Dismissing the Shadow as a 'whimpering wraith' (which might have served to elevate the Guardian's power by comparison and therefore the stakes, if it wasn't so apt a description) the incomparable Valentine Dyall makes his first appearance, this time mercifully not sporting a dead crow on his head in case you didn't realise this be-goateed figure with a gravelly voice as deep as the pits of Hell is, in fact, a bad guy.

The decision to have him initially appear as a photo negative is an inspired one, creating a suitably scary visage when brought to life by Dyall's sneering, malevolent face, the glowing eyes nightmare material for many of the programme's younger viewers. As good as

Dyall (and his voice) is, however, one cannot help but think that the original intention was for both guardians to be played by the same actor, as the Black's ploy of taking on the form of his opposite here in an attempt to trick our heroes into handing over the completed Key relies a little too much on both the Doctor and Romana's inability to recall exactly what the White Guardian they first met at the start of the season looked like. Are we to believe that they just see an older man and assume it is the same one because he's dressed similarly? Likewise, it suggests a rather limited scope of power on the Black Guardian's part if he can only really manage to invert his colouration.

It is not this pantomime performance that tips the Doctor to the villain's true nature however, but that he doesn't show enough concern for the fate of Astra, destined to forever remain a part of the Key. Fair enough, it is very much *de rigueur* for the Doctor's empathy and compassion to provide the key (no pun intended) to solving the narrative peril, but hang on, didn't the White Guardian implicitly threaten the Doctor himself with a future of 'nothing at all... ever' if he refused the quest? So much for Mr. Nice Guardian.

This, alongside the fact that the Black Guardian seems to have no power over the TARDIS, very much the opposite of his White opponent's abilities as seen in The Ribos Operation, renders the ending of the story very much a cop-out. Although it is neat to believe that the Black Guardian has been manipulating events all along, even that the appearance of the White at the beginning of the season was actually the evil entity in disguise, so that the dispersal of the

segments doesn't lead to the eternal chaos that he claimed to be trying to avert, the opportunity to spell this out is missed. And this is the revised ending, after incoming script editor Douglas Adams gave the original a spruce-up ahead of production as his exhausted predecessor departed for pastures new.

As mentioned, however, there are gems peppered throughout the six episodes. Tom Baker is on fine form, his interplay with Tamm as compelling and humorous as always. His performance of silly, unintimidated buffoonery (later given full throttle in stories like 'City of Death') suitably balanced with a more sombre and wary reaction to the Shadow and his machinations that serves to emphasise the dangerousness of that character that almost makes up for his distinctly un-intimidating realisation.

Baker's performance is all the more admirable considering what was going on behind the scenes during the production, with a sort of Mexican stand-off between the proprietary star and the beleaguered producer where both were on the verge of being fired at different points until cooler heads prevailed and an abrupt end to the Fourth Doctor's era was averted. Considering the later visible dissatisfaction Baker would display when he came up against the force of nature that was

John Nathan-Turner in Season 18, it is a wonder that he could still perform the whimsy and boggle-eyed joy in 'The Armageddon Factor' for which his incarnation is most known.

And so, with the Key scattered once again throughout the cosmos, the Doctor and Romana travel into the unknown. With a 'randomiser' attached to the console, it seems clear that the story-arc experiment had been deemed unsuccessful. Indeed, it was a narrative device whose ambition wouldn't really be repeated until 1986's 'The Trial of a Time Lord' which, again, would prove that the whole was less than the sum of its parts.

The season was a noble endeavour. Weaving a thread through several stories across the year presaged the kind of long-running science fiction television of the 1990s and beyond. It's just such a shame that when the end came, it was with rather more a whimper than a bang.



DESTINY OF THE DALEKS

Review by Chris Stone

Worth Matravers in Dorset isn't the prettiest village in the country or the most inaccessible. Being only four miles from Swanage, it is relatively unremarkable with a church, a small pond and a pub – The Square and Compass. Yet despite this, Hollywood in the shape of Disney has visited here twice in the last 10 years to film at a nearby quarry called Winspit and sci-fi fans are often seen there to take pictures of the stone and caves.

All this though isn't due to John Carter – a 2012 film – or the *Star Wars* spin off *Andor*. It's mostly down to its use in Doctor Who in 'The Underwater Menace'. However, despite that particular triumph in British science fiction, I think it best to remember Winspit in a different way – as the home planet of the Daleks in 'Destiny of the Daleks'.

I'm not sure how old I was when I first went down to Winspit. It was probably when I was eleven and I went for a walk at the coast there with my family. At that time, I was unaware of a Doctor Who connection, but when I reached the caves it seemed familiar. This seemed odd to me when I thought that it had the uncanny feeling of an alien world. I tried to shake it off thinking that it was just me, but something about that place stayed with me when I left. I put the whole thing to the back of my mind as best as I could, though I never really shrugged the sense of déjà vu off.

It wasn't until 1994 and around my birthday that things fell into place. As a present (or possibly bought with birthday money in July) I purchased 'Destiny of the Daleks' on video. Later that day, I settled down to watch it. Imagine my surprise when I saw the caves I played in years before and the TARDIS landing in the cave entrance.

As I watched I remembered the first time I saw the story in 1979 with bits I remembered incredibly vividly and some parts I could barely recall at all and yet...

...I was back in 1979 in Junior School. In the playground everyone was suddenly playing a new game – Rock, Paper, Scissors. It had appeared from nowhere and swamped the school with everyone challenging their friends and classmates at a series of games and keeping score. It was a game which had captured the hearts of minds of a group of under tens more so than anything in my experience. Of course all this would be eclipsed by the Rubik's Cube in 18 months or so, but for a short period in September/October 1979 – Rock, Paper, Scissors was everything. There are even Rock, Paper, Scissors competitions around the world and even a World Championships. Maybe we were onto a thing back then after all.

Off course it's obvious now why everyone was watching. Thanks a little to the ITV strike – though it truth there was nothing else worth watching – 14.4

million people were watching Episode Four. These aren't paltry figures – it still makes the final part of 'Destiny' the third most watched episode of Doctor Who.

But was it worth watching?

I'll pass that question while I take some things into consideration and believe me there are a heck of a lot of things to consider.

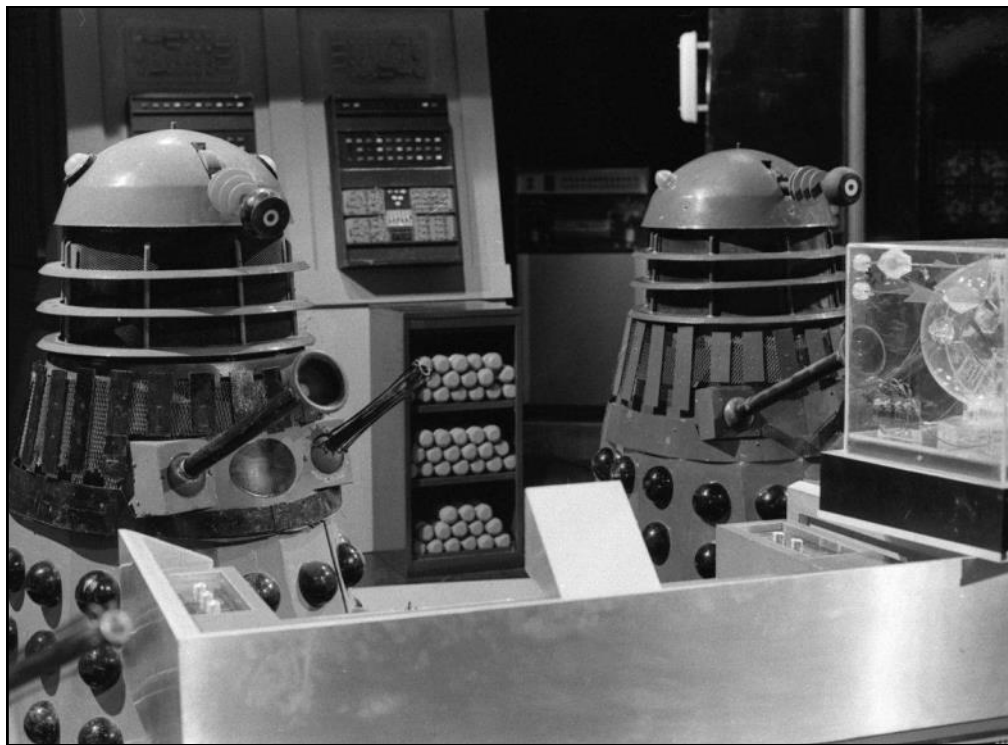
I mean, I have often wonder if the production staff headed down to Totters Lane junkyard before this one was filmed or went to the BBC props warehouse just after it was demolished with a wrecking ball. Once you notice them, you can't take your eyes off them just like the warts on Oliver Cromwell. I'm of course talking about the Daleks in this story. They are not just battered

and bruised like an unfortunate cod, but they are almost falling apart before your eyes. In fact they seem so fragile, that a bone china tea cup could survive a harder impact.

That's less than fair, but it doesn't make the problem with the Daleks disappear and unfortunately it isn't the only one.

When the Daleks were established in 1963, it was quite clear what they were. They were green blobs of hate in a metal case. Ok – I'll give you back then that they were like dodgems and could only go around on metal and they all died at the end of the very first story – but you can't have anything. At least the green blob in exterminating machine part had been pretty consistent ever since...

In 'Destiny', the Daleks are just robots. I



could go on to complain and whinge about this, but you've all heard it before and continuity wise it smells worse than a family of Slitheen locked in a phone booth, but it fits well with the main story idea.

In truth, problems start from the very beginning. Romana chooses to regenerate by modelling a variety of bodies as though they were cheap suits. It's proved to be a bone of contention for many fans who once they get their teeth into something cannot let go. It might explain the problem with the pair's robot dog, who has seemingly malfunctioned, presumably fighting over the metaphorical bone. There must have been a fair amount of barking as well as brawling, because K9 has lost its voice in the process.

After this the Doctor and Romana produce a supply of drugs and start popping pills like candy. Fortunately, it's not an addiction, but to combat the radiation prevalent on the planet. I quite like this plot point because it draws parallels with the very first Dalek story. Unfortunately, once we reach Episode Two, all mention of the anti-radiation pills is gone as if they were never part of the story. One wonders if they had overdosed on the said drug with the main side effect being amnesia.

Design is the final bugbear of this tale – even more frustrating when so much of it is so good. Many of the sets, the Movellan ship in particular, look great and the designer clearly realised them well, however he obviously didn't get a memo as to the plot of the episode and the director must take some of the blame too. As you probably know, from the moment the TARDIS arrives on Ska-

ro, the Doctor and Romana notice tremors in the ground which turns out to be the Daleks drilling down into the bunker. Apart from the single set where Romana falls down and later is climbed up, there is absolutely no sense of up and down. This is an issue which is compounded when the Doctor reaches Davros. The bunker is deep underground – right? So how can the Doctor escape by climbing out of a window?

That's not all which irks and grates in this tale and I think the problem stems from Terry Nation. Rumour suggests that he just wrote a couple of pages draft for the story and it was written for the most part by Douglas Adams. Ken Grieve the director says as much on the DVD and it mirrors what happened for the second half of 'The Daleks' Master Plan' which was written in the most part by Dennis Spooner.

Does this really matter? Well...the first episode is fairly typical of a Terry Nation story. For the most part it is a two hander with the Doctor and Romana exploring the planet together and having the bulk of the dialogue with the obligatory appearance of the Daleks at the cliffhanger. Only Commander Sharrell who appears in the penultimate scene has lines and Tyssan doesn't speak – maybe he has laryngitis?

We may never know the answer to that question but there are things I haven't mentioned about this story. After Episode One it fairly rocks along at a cracking pace. It's silly in places, always compelling and as for entertainment value – despite the gaping plot holes – it's hard to beat.

It isn't just because some young whip-

per-snapper script editor came in and put sparkle and gold dust on something that was less than gleaming or the fact that the two leads are at the peak of the powers. There is a *je ne sais quoi* about this one which probably flies on the coat tails of the previously filmed story.

Tom is utterly tremendous in this. "Well..."-ing away with the best of them – literally saying the word thirty-five times in four episodes – while there are only seven "Ah!"-s in total and five are in the first scene. I'm not judging Tom's performance by these obviously, but he really does twinkle magnificently and his on-screen chemistry with Lalla is simply to die for. It's a shame this lessoned somewhat in the subsequent season. Ah well, you can't have everything.

Primarily Doctor Who is entertainment and this is that in both spades and shovels. If I ever need cheering up, this is the story I would put on. Although there are 'better' stories than this with tighter plot and dialogue and cleverer nuances, this wins on sheer enjoyment. In fact, for me this is my preferred colour Dalek story – the only exception being the 50th anniversary episode which isn't really a Dalek story at all (it's a celebration about the past and future with Daleks in – but it's not about the Doctor).

Of course, because I like it and it brings back memories, it doesn't make it quality, and the shortcomings are all too obvious... ...but give me a hundred minutes to fill to bring a smile on my face then this is the one that goes in the DVD player.



CITY OF DEATH

Review by Tom Paine

As is now widely known, 'City of Death' was a hasty re-write of a previously commissioned story 'A Gamble With Time'. David Fisher had contributed a script involving a 'Bulldog Drummond' type of character and was set in Monte Carlo amidst an attempt by Scarlioni, a member of the Sephiroth race, to rig the roulette table at the casinos to finance his time travel experiments. Graham Williams later said that David Fisher's initial scripts would have made a "cracking Bulldog Drummond". However they were not what he was looking for, and once it was confirmed that the location part of the production could be moved overseas on a realistic budget, Graham Williams and Douglas Adams heavily re-wrote the story, centering it on Paris in the current day as opposed to Monte Carlo in the 1920s, and removing the casino element. David Fisher was unable to make a substantial contribution to the re-writes owing to personal issues, and the final story, now

'City of Death' was effectively a joint effort between Fisher, Williams, and Adams, hence the use of the, later very familiar, pseudonym 'David Agnew'.

What finally emerged remains a firm favourite to this day and was very popular with viewers (although the lack of any programmes on ITV helped). Even though it was produced under enormous pressure the story holds up exceptionally well, which cannot always be said of other adventures written under similar conditions. What it does present us with is what could reasonably be described as 'peak Adams'. It is Doctor Who as Douglas Adams saw it. We probably would have seen more of this had the ill-fated 'Shada' made it to the screen at the end of the season. There is little horror in the tale, and that gap is very much taken up with humour of the type that can also be seen in The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy, Dirk Gently and other Douglas



Adams writings. The humour here is largely (though not always) done as it should be. It helps to drive the narrative and to offer exposition (such as the scene in the previous series at the end of 'The Armageddon Factor' when the Doctor pretends he might use the Key to Time to rule the universe). Even as early as 'City of Death' though, we can see the silliness occasionally creeping in, especially in the scenes when the Doctor and Count Scarlioni (Julian Glover) are brought face-to-face by Scarlioni's henchman Hermann. Scarlioni and his wife, the Countess, are both cool as cucumbers whilst the Doctor throws himself around like a clown as a children's party. For the most part though the humour is held in check. By the end of the season the whole style of the series has changed completely but for the moment, 'City of Death' is an example of this era of Doctor Who at its pinnacle.

Filming overseas is now common on Doctor Who and happened on a number of subsequent occasions in the classic era, but this story was the first time Doctor Who made the trip. Whereas later excursions were not necessarily crucial to the plot, Paris was central to 'City of Death'.

Even if the locations chosen for filming had been in Surrey, they would, at the very least, needed to have looked like Paris. John Nathan-Turner was at this time the Production Unit Manager and Graham Williams's right-hand man (in fact Graham Williams asked for JNT to be credited as Assistant Producer at one point, although this was declined). JNT was very adept at managing the budget of Doctor Who as he demonstrated the following year when he became producer, but for now, being very aware of the eyes on how much was being spent, he was able to actually deliver a block of overseas filming for what turned out to be less money that it may have cost to stay in the UK.

No Doctor Who story is perfect. 'City of Death' however excels in many areas – the cast, the story, the dialogue, the locations and the pace and direction are all of the highest standard, and whilst ratings were artificially boosted by the strike at the main competition of ITV, it was clearly loved by the wider TV watching audience too.



THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

Review by Paul Burns

'The Creature from the Pit' is wonderful.

There, I have said it. And yet, unfairly the one thing that always seems to derail it in fans affections is, in comparison to the many enjoyable elements of the serial, a very small component. However, the shadow of Erato looms large in any discussion about this slice of Seventies pantomime camp, and presumably the realisation of the titular creature contributes to the poor showing in any Fourth Doctor story poll. In the latest Doctor Who Magazine readers survey, 'The Creature from the Pit' ranks at 35. Only six stories rank lower. In previous polls, dating back to 1998, the story has never risen above 34. It is my job in this review to champion the serial and commit to my belief that it is one of the best Doctor Who stories.

'The Creature from the Pit' was the

third serial in season 17 of Doctor Who and was broadcast between 27th October and 17th November 1979. It was the third story written by David Fisher, following 'The Stones of Blood' and 'The Androids of Tara' in 1978. The script was edited by Douglas Adams, as was the whole of season 17. It was broadcast after Adams' City of Death, which he co-wrote with producer Graham Williams under the pseudonym of David Agnew. Adams peppers Fisher's script with his trademark humour, not always welcomed as Fisher confirms:

"It wasn't terribly easy to write, as Douglas wanted bits of comedy here and bits of comedy there. It ended up funnier than it should have been. Doctor Who, if you could get the right kind of comedy, worked very well with it, but you also needed the horror, certainly some menace."



Fisher and Adams relied heavily on Greek mythology for the character names and locations for 'The Creature from the Pit'. Adrasta was originally a Phrygian mountain goddess. Erato was one of the nine divine Muses, whose name signified 'lovely'. Chloris was a name for the nymph/goddess queen who spread flowers across the world. Tythonus/Tithonus was the lover of Eros, Goddess of the Dawn.

It is undeniable that 'The Creature from the Pit' veers perilously close to sitcom territory, typified by the borderline offensive Jewish bandits and their obsession with avarice (leader Torvin, played by John Bryans was based on Fagin from *Oliver Twist*.), but the strength of the performances from an amazing cast saves it from being ridiculous. It certainly gives a gleeful Tom Baker ample opportunity to be playful and bounce off his fellow actors, the majority of whom he had great admiration and affection for. There was also a slight friction between Baker and director Christopher Barry. Barry had directed Tom on his first serial, 'Robot', and five years later, he noticed a change in the actor:

"He'd always been a very creative actor, even when we first worked together. When I came to do this with him, there was one famous scene with Lalla Ward and other actors involved, and he was very much picking up the directorial cudgel, and I say cudgel because he was always battering me over the head with it and taking control. I remember saying, all right, do it your way, I don't care, and he saying sorry and backing off."

After a brief introduction to the planet Chloris, we join the current TARDIS

team of the Fourth Doctor, Romana and K9. The Doctor is reading a passage from Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Actor David Brierley takes over the role of K9 from John Leeson in this serial, and for his audition, he read a passage from *Peter Rabbit* in K9's voice. It takes awhile to get used to Brierley's interpretation of the character, as Leeson's lighter, friskier tone is so familiar. I very much doubt I would have noticed the change when I first watched the episode back in 1979.

Although 'The Creature from the Pit' was the third broadcast serial of season 17, it was the first to be filmed, with Lalla Ward's debut performance as Romana. Ward remains highly critical of her initial portrayal of the character:

"I found myself doing Mary Tamm acting, wearing white boots and all the things that Mary did beautifully and I just did appallingly badly, so I floundered about ready to throw myself into the pit with the creature."

I think Ward is being too hard on herself. Although she is somewhat reduced to carrying K9 around for a large chunk of the serial, Romana has some gloriously imperious moments, especially during her scenes with the bandits. Ward was always a fan of Douglas Adams' wit and you can see her enjoyment in telling the bandit to "blow harder" on K9's whistle. It is even better when the dog replies "I'm coming."

Ward's dim view of her performance matched her despair at her first costumes: "June Hudson was one of the best designers on *Doctor Who*," she explains. "she was wonderful and you can tell from all the costumes on abso-

lutely everybody else in this story how good she was. But what she did with me was entirely my fault because I didn't know what I was doing. I was sort of playing Mary Tamm and I know bad workmen shouldn't blame their tools but honestly nobody could act in a frock like that."

Again, Ward's self deprecation is unwarranted, as I believe she looks every bit as fabulous as her predecessor.

The TARDIS arrives on the planet Chloris, beautifully shot on film at Ealing Studios, which had been home to jungle planets before. There is a giant metal egg on the planet, and I wonder if this was a cheeky nod to 'The Clangers' iron chicken, who produced an egg in a 1971 episode of the Oliver Postgate Smallfilms series. As the Doctor investigates the egg, he is attacked by Wolfweeds. These tumbling, smothering plant-like creatures are a testament to special effects designer Mat Irvine's ingenuity, and far more successful than a certain other creation we are about to meet.

Enter the wonderfully dour and menacing Karela, played by Eileen Way. Way had appeared in 'An Unearthly Child' and holds the dubious honour of being the first character to die in the programme. Karela brings the Doctor to Lady Adrasta, played with camp scene chewing relish by Myra Frances. Frances had made TV history in 1974 by performing its first lesbian kiss with Alison Steadman in the Second City Firsts episode, 'Girl'. Tom Baker got on very well with both actresses, especially Frances, who he invited to have a coffee in a cafe in Ealing high street with her in full Adrasta costume.

Adrasta is at her glorious, hilariously bossy best when officiously stage directing her underlings:

"Guardmaster, you go first with her, you next, then you Karela. Followed by me." Less successful is her exclamation "You must be Romana." thirty seconds after the Doctor announces Romana's arrival. However, how can anyone not love her maniacal crowning scene, where she desperately screams at Romana holding



K9: "Point the dog against the rock!" I consider Adrasta to be one of the Doctor's best adversaries. Certainly the hands on hips campest. As Myra Frances explains, director Christopher Barry did not want her to tone it down: "I was so terrified, because Tom is such a big character, and I was told nine times out of ten when I was acting: NAR, No Acting Required, and every time I had a scene with Tom, Chris said 'No, more, more! So finally, I felt quite powerful."

Douglas Adams' fingerprints can be seen all over 'The Creature from the Pit'. After the Doctor dives into the titular Pit, he attempts to climb back up by consulting an Everest by stages book. Discovering it is in Tibetan, he takes out a Teach yourself Tibetan book. A beautiful aside that completely sums the character of the Doctor up. Always playfully resourceful.

It is in the Pit that the Doctor meets Organon, the astrologer Adrasta had thrown into the Pit, but had thus far escaped being killed by the Creature. Organon, played by the fantastic Geoffrey Bayldon, was already a familiar face to children in his former role of Catweazle. It is clear Bayldon is relishing the role. The brilliant "As my dear mother always used to say..if you can help anybody, like preventing them from being eaten by a monster, then do so, they might be grateful." is just a sample of the witty script Fisher and Adams use to paint the undeniable chemistry between Bayldon and Baker. Geoffrey Bayldon was considered for the part of the first Doctor, which he turned down, telling his agent he was playing old men too much. He considered working 52 weeks a year too

much. "It's too long to be so old." he explained. He also declined the role of the second Doctor, so it is a treat to finally see him in the programme and get a long overdue glimpse of what he could have brought to the role.

So, there is no longer avoiding the elephant in the room. Or rather, the blobby green balloon thing with the large member in the Pit. Let us all hail Erato, who I genuinely love, despite the obvious design problems. Geoffrey Bayldon remembers seeing the phallic creature for the first time: "I can remember the greatest detail about it. It was a great shock. I didn't believe my eyes because what I was seeing was not exactly a monster, one not very repeatable before an audience of children particularly. How can I describe it? Its shape was very recognisable. I realised it shouldn't be seen by me or anybody else. it really should be altered before the public saw it."

Mat Irvine and his special effects team did the best they could with the script (which described Erato as being "unimaginably huge-anything from a quarter of a mile to a mile in length"), time constraints and budget limitations. A metal frame covered with foam rubber was constructed, surrounded by softly blown up meteorological balloons (as weatherman Micheal Fish gleefully explained to Lalla Ward in the BBC cartoon).

Visual effects assistant Morag McLean was charged with operating the creature: "I remember being inside this monster. I was sitting there and I was pushing out the sides, and also they had this pseudopodia on the front. Someone else was in there with me driving

this pseudopodia, making it snake around. And all of a sudden I heard great gales of laughter from the crew.” It is hard to avoid the humour of the realisation of Erato, but the production team did a superb job in damage limitation with the use of sound, lighting, and the effective dramatic Dudley Simpson score ramping up the tension. In Part Three the Doctor attempts to communicate with Erato, and having tried talking to it, and suggesting telepathy, the Time Lord blows into the appendage, thus sealing the funniest, most jaw dropping moment in the history of the show. Children would probably not have noticed any impropriety in the Doctor’s actions, but honestly, what were the production team thinking? Was this last resort method of communication included in the original script? Was it the work of Fisher or Adams, or a devilish spot of improvisation from a mischievous Tom Baker? We may never know.

But ‘The Creature from the Pit’ has an actual story going on, and it is a cracking one.

The bandits steal Erato’s communication device and fix it to the creature and in a gloriously over the top cliffhanger Adrasta screams, realising her evil plot is about to come undone. The Doctor communicates with Erato through the larynx borrowing device. Erato is a High Ambassador from the planet Tythonus, whose people survive by ingesting chlorophyll and mineral salts. He came to Chloris to arrange a trading deal between the two races. Tythonus provides metal for Chloris, and Chloris provides chlorophyll for Tythonus. Adrasta imprisoned him, seeing him as a threat for her monopoly of

metal. Adrasta is killed by the Wolf-weeds. David Fisher admitted he had a habit of killing his villainesses because they reminded him of his “dreadful aunts” So when Adrasta bit the dust, it was really David’s Aunt Gladys. The Doctor uses the TARDIS and aluminium spun from Erato to deflect a pesky neutron star destroying Chloris. This idea came from David visiting Cambridge Institute of Astronomy, where an excited scientist, also a Doctor Who fan, schooled him in the science of neutron stars. Once the Doctor takes care of business, Erato gives the planet its trading agreement. See, he was a good guy after all.

Alas, although Erato escaped onscreen in his spaceship at the end of ‘The Creature from the Pit’, he met a rather ignoble end offscreen, as a frustrated Morag McLean explains: “He was degenerating, he was held together with sticky tape and rubber bands. You couldn’t see any of it thank goodness, but I knew what it was like on the inside and it was really ripped to shreds and functioning less and less well. I took out my Stanley knife and I ripped it to shreds, and that was the end of Erato, and I never wanted to ever see him again.”

Sadly, the appearance of Erato will always overshadow this glorious slice of Seventies space campery. It has wonderful performances, a great storyline and Tom at his mercurial best. It certainly deserves a higher placing than 35 in fans affectations.



NIGHTMARE OF EDEN

Review by Jeremy Bentham

Is it fair to suggest any Doctor Who serial could get deliberately bodgered by those entrusted to evolve it from script to screen, letting it fall far short of the quality expected of television drama productions? Surely not.

Decades ago, in another life, I had the honour of publishing *An Adventure in Space & Time*, a fanzine partwork comprising the first serious attempt to document and review every Doctor Who story from its 1963 beginnings. The format was quite straightforward. The early pages of each issue looked at the concepts, characters, and storyline before moving into coverage of the technical aspects of production using the best research documents available during the 1980s, usually rehearsal and camera scripts plus the odd filming diary if we were lucky.

The editors and writers were totally free to praise or criticise each serial as they saw fit, but one mantra I did ask to be observed was that nobody in television ever set out to make a bad Doctor Who story. Events might conspire to derail aspirations, but even when the chips were down, everyone involved did their best to resolve matters and achieve a positive experience for the viewers.

However, as more and more has been exhumed from the BBC archives by such luminaries as Andrew Pixley and Richard Bignell, and as more interviews have appeared in print and recorded documentaries from actors, writers,

creatives and technicians, some reap-praising has been warranted. Fortunately, though, most stories transmitted still reflect the "all hands to the pumps" ethos whenever adversity has struck. But maybe not all...

The problem is television viewership is an ever-hungry diner that consumes content with a rapacious and insatiable appetite. It is also very picky, constantly demanding high standards of ingredients, talent and artistry to prevent it drifting away unsatisfied in search of alternative fayre.

It follows then that preparation of television output requires all the elements and factors involved to come together like perfectly cut jigsaws so that art and imagination get fused and transformed using tools and technology, management and planning to ensure each new delicately framed product gets its moment in the limelight.

That is the theory. In practice, as with all of life's endeavours, there can be slips 'twixt cup and lip. Gremlins in machinery can exact time penalties or rushed compromises, budget issues can lead to cost-reducing shortcuts, and even human interaction throughout the production process can cause end results to differ wildly from the imagined vision.

Luckily, the industry is a master of quick thinking and resourcefulness. Delays and glitches can be worked around, narrative issues "fixed in post", even whole



chunks of missing material papered over during edits, so the overall illusion is not spoiled for all but the most attentive of viewers.

Accepting the above explains why 'Nightmare of Eden', on its first UK broadcast, continued to maintain Season 17's healthy ratings-per-episode of more than nine million viewers. The partnership of Tom Baker's Doctor, Romana and K-9 continued playing to its loyal family viewing gallery, and the story itself has pace, a lively plot and, for its day, some very cutting-edge electronic effects.

Only if you were able to lift the curtain and see beyond the stage magic might you have glimpsed all the frantic work and hasty compromises performed behind the scenes to hide so many cracks and then perhaps to weep for what might have been.

'Nightmare of Eden' proved a stern lesson to me in avoiding what we now term as 'spoilers': knowing too much in

advance about a story in development so that, when finally viewed on TV, it frankly disappoints.

To explain. By mid-summer 1979 the Doctor Who Appreciation Society had been running for three years and had established good working relationships with the programme's production office and with some BBC departments. And, although not quite with any accorded blessings, it had also been possible occasionally to visit Television Centre and observe serials in production from a studio's viewing gallery. Additionally, on the absolute condition that plot information was not divulged in any society publication ahead of broadcast, we were sometimes sent copies of the Drama Early Warning Synopsis (EWS) for future serials to help with planning our own features and coverage.

I did not record when I received the EWS for 'Nightmare of Eden'. The document is dated 27 June 1979, but I suspect it was in August, that I devoured this one-page plot summary, convinced

that an absolute classic was soon going before the cameras.

Most Doctor Who serials contain one, maybe two great ideas around which to tell their stories. 'Nightmare of Eden' has four!

The notion of two spacecraft locking together after emerging from hyperspace at exactly the same spot had been done before in Doctor Who ('Frontier in Space' and sort of 'The Time Monster') but writer Bob Baker's new contribution to this pseudo-physics was to suggest the overlap points could generate areas of dimensional instability: crossing points between one reality and another.

Idea two, Zoologist Tryst's CET machine – capable of housing on a data crystal recording in real time, whole environments snatched from different worlds – had its roots in Robert Holmes' Miniscope ('Carnival of Monsters'), but the novelty here was the dimensional instabilities surrounding the two fused ships would rupture the boundaries between zones, enabling the escape of savage wildlife from their CET environment to threaten the collided ships' passengers and crew in the real world.

And then we had the Mandrels, outlined variously as "revolting, mud-formed jungle monsters" or simply "slimy mud creatures". Here was the suggestion of a gruesome lifeform instantly familiar to any comics enthusiast of the 1970s, for whom DC's Swamp Thing or Marvel's Man-Thing were highly regarded creations. How much would Baker's swamp beasts, with their mud-covered hides and stinging tenta-

cles, resemble Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson's iconic plant-humanoid?

Finally, and absolutely hinting at a powerful storyline in the making, was the prospect of Doctor Who tackling a tale about drug trafficking and the tragedies of narcotic addiction. Strong material, that Bob Baker and Dave Martin had previously introduced into an episode of Philip Hinchcliffe's primetime police action-drama Target. But were Graham Williams and Douglas Adams really going to do something similar within the boundaries of the BBC's flagship Saturday family-viewing show? Even with 21st century hindsight it seemed revolutionary, especially considering seven more years would elapse before Phil Redmond would be allowed to cover the hard realities of heroin dependency within his own children's series, Grange Hill.

Further appetite whetting happened with first sight of the BBC Television Play Synopses covering 'Nightmare of Eden', published and distributed by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) about a month before this serial's transmission. Up until the advent of on-screen captioning for programmes via the BBC's CEEFAX service in the early 80s, RNID synopses were the pri-



mary aid documents by which viewers with hearing disabilities could follow certain programmes. Thus, if you happened to have a friend or a relative registered with the RNID, getting sight of Doctor Who programme summaries was very straightforward.

All key plot points and narrative elements per episode were documented, although some surprise reveals and a story's final resolution were often kept deliberately obscure. Another problem was that these synopses were usually compiled by the RNID using early rehearsal scripts, ergo some variances from what ultimately appeared in the finished programme were possible. For example: the narcotic in the TV serial – Vraxoin or Vrax for short – was referred to in the RNID material by Bob Baker's original branding – Xylophelin or 'Zip'.

But that was largely immaterial. What

was very material, and very clearly telegraphed in the RNID synopsis for episode three, was yet another of Bob Baker's big ideas... "A mandrel attacks Dr Who, but at the last minute is destroyed by a power line and dissolves into dust. Dr Who picks up the dust and realises what it is - the answer to their problem - the dust is Zip." Okay, this was a major 'spoiler' but one which so elegantly tied together the Mandrels, the ulterior purpose of the CET machine, the source of the drug supplies and, of course, the motives and methods of the principal villains. Such imaginative plotting...

However, we are getting ahead of ourselves here. Long before November's first sight of the RNID synopses, things had happened and were still happening in BBC-land that would derail expectations for this story right from conception.



Back on 25th June, Producer Graham Williams had received a curt memo from his boss, Head of Series & Serials Graeme MacDonald, explicitly stating "Please watch the drug culture bit...".

Just as gelding shears had been applied to Williams to remove the gothic horror and violence from Doctor Who two years ago, so now they were being wielded to neuter any temptations to push forward strong anti-drugs messages and imagery via the programme. There would be none of Rigg's pitiful 'cold turkey' pleading to Romana whom he believes has supplies of Vrax/Zip. "All I want is to be happy again. You don't know how it feels to want that more than anything at all... Just a little bit. You've got it..."

Even operating under such limitations strong directors might have coached out convincing performances from the intended drug-influenced cast members, as Douglas Camfield had from Katy Manning in her role as a heroin junkie for Baker and Martin's episode of Target, Big Elephant. However, it was 'Nightmare of Eden's lot to be allocated Alan Bromly.

Bromly's career in television had been long and extensive as an actor and producer as well as a director. He was known as a safe pair of hands who could bring a show in on time and on budget. But he was no lover of science-fiction and much less of electronic or visual effects. In 1974 he had faced criticism from Barry Letts during the making of 'The Time Warrior' for eschewing an imaginative model shot of Linx's spacecraft rising above Irongron's castle before exploding, in favour of a simple cut from the live action to some

stock footage of a quarry blast. Letts was also unhappy that Bromly had left most of the post-production work to his P.A, Marcia Wheeler, taking little interest in the show once studio work was done.

Close to retirement in 1979 Bromly's name had been "suggested" to Graham Williams by one of his bosses, keen to offer the 64-year-old some BBC work following stints on Coronation Street and Crossroads for ITV.

Once again Bromly proved an uncomfortable fit for Doctor Who, clashing as early as the rehearsal sessions with Tom Baker who disliked intensely his regimented, management-by-memo methods and his blunt dismissal of nearly all the lead actor's 'ideas for improvement'.

Two unanswered questions though. Why did Bromly allow guest star Lewis Fiander to play Tryst with a cod Heinz Wolff accent, and why did he go along with the infamous "Oh my arms, oh my legs, oh my everything" Part Four confrontation between the Doctor and the Mandrels. That escapade replaced a far scarier sequence in the rehearsal scripts where Costa is stung by a retreating Mandrel's tentacle just as the Doctor is preparing to close the CET interface with the Eden projection.

And here is where we really must reference the Mandrels. The Eaglemoss range of Doctor Who figurines produced a very faithful scale representation of Costume Designer Rupert Jarvis's jungle creatures in 2018 but, with its over-long arms, duckbill platypus 'beak' and Abba-proportioned bell-bottomed feet, it is very apparent in

daylight that a mandrel is no H.R. Giger Alien of the calibre cinema audiences were flocking to see in autumn 1979.

Where the Mandrels might have worked is, if the studio set lighting had tried to emulate the gloomy, shadow-filled interiors of Ridley Scott's *Nostromo*. Lighting for a five-camera videotape studio can be tricky but you only need look at Brian Clemett's set-ups for *Planet of Evil* and 'The Deadly Assassin' to see it done well. In contrast, Warwick Fielding's flat, game show lighting for all scenes aboard *The Empress* just highlighted the Mandrels' limitations in the chills department. Even their zips were visible at times!

And that is a shame, because in those scenes set within the Eden projection, Fielding did engineer a darkened environment where these luminous-eyed monsters looked far more menacing. A case of less is more, even if the subdued lighting was primarily done to hide the profusion of pot plants providing most of the foreground greenery.

An agreed highlight of this serial was its pioneering video effects, for which much praise was eventually accorded to FX Designer Colin Mapson and particularly electronic effects operator, AJ 'Mitch' Mitchell. And rightly so.

Mitchell was an absolute Doctor Who trooper. Having virtually rewired a studio at Pebble Mill, Birmingham to accomplish the challenging electronic effects required for 'Horror of Fang Rock', his task with 'Nightmare of Eden' was nothing less than proving if model work done in a TV Centre studio could compete with filmed miniature scenes. In some instances, they could not. The

actual collision between the Hecate and the Empress lacks depth of field not to mention any sense of enormity to the impact. But those multiple feed sequences of the Hecate's shuttlecraft moving between ships, recorded on 14 August with Colin Mapson in the gallery director's chair, achieved satisfactory results under very trying circumstances. And why was Mapson helming these scenes, you might ask? Because Bromly had decided to go home early, having previously delivered a torrent of criticism and, apparently, some abuse towards the technical and camera teams for the time these shots were taking to set up, align and shoot.

Neither was Bromly winning any fans among the cast for his directing style. Anyone watching from the TC6 viewing gallery on 27 August would have witnessed the now infamous and invective-strewn row between Bromly and Tom Baker on the studio floor, with Graham Williams trying desperately to mediate. But it was to no avail. By mid-afternoon of the last day of recording, Bromly was gone, taking no further part in the remaining production stages.

Even then, the nightmare was far from over. Studio overruns had cost the programme dearly, an edit session had to be rescheduled due to the discovery of asbestos at TV Centre, and even the two-day music recording block at Lime Grove lost around 40 minutes due to no lifts being available to convey instruments up to the allocated studio.

Is it any wonder then that the finished programme fell short on many counts? A first-class script, whose pre-publicity had whetted appetites, had not been supported towards attaining its full po-

tential. And even where human endeavours had not been a prime factor, numerous instances of Murphy's Law - anything that can go wrong will go wrong - had conspired to add a nightmare to The 'Nightmare of Eden'.

Fandom's reception of this story at the time was, in the main, quite poor, with terms like "pantomime performances" and "ripe with faults" being levelled at its troubled presentation. And with quite a lot known about this serial in advance of broadcast, it is perhaps inevitable the overall sentiment expressed was disappointment.

And yet, while the prime badgering influence here was undoubtedly the selection of a sub-optimal director, it is absolutely right to be reminded of the efforts so many others contributed to smoothing over Bromly's failings.

I would argue Graham Williams said it best in the memo he wrote to Vision Manager, John C. Carter, dated 31 August 1979. "The crew worked generously with a director who seemed unable to reciprocate their goodwill and who offered little appreciation of their professional skills. I believe the successful completion of the programme reflects the excellent working relationship we have enjoyed up to now and trust that no one is left in any doubt as to the real appreciation we all have for the effort, time and enthusiasm which has been so amply demonstrated by the entire crew."

Even without the doubled-edged sword of spoilers there was still quality in evidence, with more than nine million viewers tuning in to prove it.



THE HORNS OF NIMON

Review by Phillip Gilfus

The Tom Baker era has plenty of famous serials that immediately come to mind, even for the more casual Doctor Who fan. 'The Horns of Nimon' is not one of those.

I suspect that in any ranking of Fourth Doctor stories, one might see this placed towards the bottom quarter. Is it just the 'accidental' series 17 finale (given the sad fate that ultimately befell the next story 'Shada'), which producer Graham Williams described as "... a weak script and a weak programme", or has this story's legacy evolved over time?

Since this serial is only a few more months older than me (originally airing between 22nd December 1979 and 12th January 1980), I wish to make a mild defence of my contemporary of 40 plus years. Though I must confess, I may have been slow on the uptake since it took until the fourth episode for the script's anti-imperialism theme to fully hit me. Nevertheless, I will take up the case of recommending 'The Horns of Nimon' to both old and new fans.

For anyone who does not remember the story, the quick version is that the Doctor, Romana, and K9 meet a group of teenagers from the planet Aneth, who are serving as sacrifices to the feared Nimon. This mysterious creature is the theoretical benefactor of the fading Skonnian Empire, led by Soldeed. The Nimon can be "accessed" through a portal, which is where these sacrificial

teens are ultimately led. This portal leads to a complex where, after many chases around a labyrinth of corridors, it is discovered that the Nimon, a minotaur-looking creature, is one of many of his species. The Nimon is creating a transmat machine that will transfer his people from another planet to Skonnos so that they can eventually take over the Skonnian Empire. His modus operandi is to arrive on a planet, make a lot of grand promises to the local populace, offering superior technology and advancement, but then end up taking the planet's resources and destroying the people. In the end, the Doctor and friends destroy the Nimons' machine, which eventually blows up the baddies, allowing the teens freedom to return to their home.

Certainly, that is the very quick version. I want to get all the obvious challenges of this story out of the way before I come to my apologist approach. First and foremost, this is obviously a "bottle" episode (if one is allowed to use terms coined by Star Trek). It was the end of Season 17, money was tight, and sacrifices were made. This is perhaps most obvious with the labyrinth which is just the same corridor/wall pieces used a dozen different ways. However, a bottle episode, even with just a few sets, can still be memorable, so long as it has a strong story and engaging characters.

Speaking of characters, this brings us to the titular monster of the piece, the

Nimon himself. Doctor Who monsters from this era can be a bit dodgy, ranging from the fantastical to the easily forgettable. For those watching at the time, I am sure that many of the monsters which some might mock today as silly and cheap looking, may very well have been scary and impressive on a 1970s British television. Nevertheless, as a Doctor Who fan in the modern era of high-definition and special effects, one must suspend certain expectations to fully enjoy those classic stories. All that said, however, I think the Nimon costume (and acting) might stop some viewers from taking the story seriously. The oversized headpiece fitting over the regular bodies of the ballet dancers who played the Nimon, swaying about, with their arms at acute angles, does not send me to watch from behind the sofa at any point during the story. The

headpiece is crudely painted with nothing to suggest moving eyes or even a neck. The Nimon would have been at home with the characters at Disneyland. This did not mean the monster could not have worked. Costume designer June Hudson has declared herself more or less proud of what she came up with but had thought that the monster would be less well-lit, covering up the more obvious costuming bits. If she had known, Hudson would have added some fur and scruffiness to the neck to hide the obvious headpiece separation that can be seen with a well-lit actor.

Such a monster makes me think of what I call my 'Invasion of the Dinosaurs' theory of Who – an especially badly designed monster and/or special effects can ultimately distract from a great sto-



ry. My theory goes, one has to imagine that there exists a George Lucas-style special edition of such a serial with modern SFX, with everything now looking much more awesome, and then ask, "Would this now be a great story?" The answer, to me, is obviously "yes!" to 'Invasion of the Dinosaurs'. But even with a more impressive (or enveloped in shadow) Nimon bull-like monster, I do not think I could also answer "yes" with 'The Horns of Nimon'.

The Nimon is, of course, supposed to bring to mind a minotaur. And what must one also have with a minotaur? Why a labyrinth, of course. And so, when any of our characters enter the (green screen) portal to the Nimon, we enter this maze of... set wall pieces. The walls change position as our character walk through these dull-looking corridors. It is more Hogwarts-style moving stairs than a labyrinth. But I don't want to make too much of it, other than I do not think it was ever explained why the walls moved in the story! It just seemed like the thought was, "The Nimon is minotaur, so he lives in a labyrinth... obviously. No other explanation needed nor required!" The facility was supposed to approximate a circuit board, so maybe circuits "opening" and "closing" are the ultimate explanation, and I just missed it. These episodes go quickly over things that need more explanation. Why are they keeping the other sacrifices in cryogenic status? What are the minerals the sacrifices are carrying for? Does the Nimon's horn attack suck out the life force from people or just kill them? Is that how the Nimon eat? Instead, it spends too much time with people just walking down corridors, being leisurely chased by Soldeed, or one or more Nimon.

So, one might be asking at this point, "When does the defence of this story begin then?" Well, for a start, without looking at any of the credits, I knew from just a few minutes into the first episode that Douglas Adams' fingerprints were all over this story. I suppose there are those fans who may not like the humour of Adams in Doctor Who (one must assume that all kinds of fans exist) in which case, this would be a further demerit against these four episodes. But for me, it is Adams' trademark humour that makes this serial worth watching. The quips and asides of the Doctor and Romana breathe life into what is otherwise, at best, a thinly plotted tale.

In what is perhaps an obvious move (but I still laughed), the Doctor pulls out a red handkerchief upon meeting the bull-like Nimon. There is also the required Adams' cricket reference. We also get many instances of the Doctor suddenly realising something! But then he is not quite sure what. The back and forth with the TARDIS trio of the two Time Lords and a robot at the beginning and end of the story is playful and cements this era of the Fourth Doctor.

The Adams' approach is also seen with the secondary villain, Soldeed, played by Graham Crowden. I will say that I thought Crowden went way overboard in his acting (and this is in a story with Tom Baker standing beside him!). If you want a pantomime villain that would give Anthony Ainley's Master a run for his money, you will get it here. I would ask viewers not to take a drink every time he gives a diabolical laugh or else you will not last past the first episode. Soldeed literally says, "You meddling fool!" at one point, and his death scene

involves even more maniacal laughter (one commentary stated this was Crowden having fun and did not mean for it to be the final take). This portrayal makes it a challenge for me to take the story seriously, but it certainly makes it more fun (I did say this would be a “mild” defence!). But these “hammy” villains are typical of the era, so it is all part of what we expect. Not every story has to be a tale of deep meaning or horror, we can just have fun sometimes!

K9 is another character that is marmite to viewers. For those detractors who roll their eyes once they see his twitching antenna ears appear, I would counter that I think he works well here. He is in the episode enough to justify his existence, but not too much to be the annoying “tin dog”. I will say that having not watched an episode where K9 is voiced by David Brierley, rather than John Leeson in some while, I first thought, “What’s wrong with his voice?” But it seems normal enough after the first episode. The inherent “character” of K9 is still there.

For those TARDIS tech lovers, we do get to see the time rotor disassembled, as the Doctor and gang are fiddling with the console throughout the story. There is one comedic sequence that may be over the top with its ridiculous Crash! Bang! Boing!, but this whole story is about chewing whatever scenery is available for the lead actors. Speaking of the TARDIS, for all the complaints about Nimon costumes and cheap production, I did enjoy the special effect of the TARDIS extending its shields in episode one, allowing the Doctor and gang to “walk” to a nearby spaceship. One would have thought it cheaper to just “dock” the two ships, but I cannot complain about something that looked quite cool.

This episode also gives the Second Romana a chance to lead the story in part. We get an appearance of her self-constructed sonic screwdriver, although it is only used early on, which was disappointing. I would have loved to see her using it as much as the Doctor does. Instead, she accidentally leaves it behind, allowing one of the henchmen to



get a drop on her later in the scene. Also, if one can focus on costumes, this is memorable look for Romana – in her fox-hunting outfit, complete with red jacket (keeping with the theme of bull-fighting perhaps?). It is a smart-looking ensemble that shows that she can keep up with the Doctor in the costume department. As for the Doctor, this will be the last time we see his traditional look before he changes to the burgundy costume of Season 18.

It is easy to criticise ‘The Horns of Nimmon’. So, I feel I must offer just a few suggestions that might have helped raise this story from “ugh” to “meh.” There are the random sacrificial teens, led by the only speaking parts of Seth and Teka (the latter played by Janet Ellis of Blue Peter fame). This group could have been given more to “spice” up the story. There was the semblance of backstory for Seth, an Aladdin-like character who lied about being a prince



and becomes a reluctant hero, spurred by the adoring Teka who buys into his lies. Seth presented himself as an Adric minus the numeracy, but, alas, there was not much for him and his gang to contribute, other than some running around the labyrinth and shooting occasional ray gun blasts. I am pretty sure one of his gang of teens gets blasted by the main Nimmon at one point, almost absent-mindedly, and everyone more or less shrugs about it.

The heart of the story is in Part Four, but it is a little late by then. There are some interesting moments with Romana and Sezom, who is basically the earlier version of Soldeed from a world the Nimmon have already destroyed. This is when I was finally hit with what this story is actually about - anti-imperialism, not bull-fighting!. If there was a way to move this to Part Three or even Part Two, I think the spirit of what the Nimmon threat was could have added more to the subsequent parts, especially with increased emphasis on Seth and Teka’s fight for freedom. What would a longer recognition from Soldeed that he has been duped by the Nimmon have looked at? Perhaps he might have enjoyed some redemption before a heroic death?

In the end, ‘The Horns of Nimmon’ will never count as a great instalment of the Fourth Doctor era. But if viewers approach it as a monster-story that is meant to be enjoyed as a lot of fun – I picture a lot of MST3K quips at the screen throughout the story – then I think the value of this serial can be saved.



SHADA

Review by John Connors

'Shada' has always attracted more attention than it really deserves due to its status as a half-made story and the fact it came from the pen of Douglas Adams. Those who've seen it in the several different releases it's had will be aware that large parts of the story are not really Adams operating at his best. Those who hadn't previously may have found the partly animated version heavy going. Despite Adams' babble of great ideas, the overall narrative is extremely laborious, some of the acting is as arch as any of this story's season bedfellows and the end result is somewhat lacking in energy.

To start with, very little at all happens in the first half hour. This is the part of the story where filming was nearest to completion so presumably more or less how it would have been broadcast, but Part One is very sluggish. It opens with an interminably long scene in some sort of sleeping chamber where the story's villain Skagra wakes up then makes sure his fellow sleepers don't. As a grab for uncommitted viewers, it would certainly have found them switching channels. Then for the next twenty minutes or so the Doctor and Romana are chatting while punting on the River Cam, Professor Chronotis is being the dotty scientist as a student tries to borrow a book while Skagra wanders around Cambridge carrying a bag and with nobody noticing his outrageous clothes.

The story finally gets going when it

seems the book has unusual molecular qualities, and it is this mystery that both the students and the Doctor & Romana are following for the next stage. It's fantastic to see Tom Baker, Lalla Ward and guesting Dennis Carey delivering Douglas Adams witty light dialogue, but on the other hand very little of it pushes the story on. At times it feels like we've dropped in on the Doctor just hanging around rather than doing anything much. Had the other sequences been more adventurous perhaps this wouldn't matter so much. Another factor in how you enjoy this depends on your reaction to Time Lord mythology circa 1980. I know some fans groan at every mention of Gallifrey but I feel Adams does keep a good balance here adding something new without treading all over what's previously been established.

The cast are clearly enjoying themselves, however the tone is very much of its time so that some of the Doctor/Romana/Chronotis exchanges come across as exactly the sort of highbrow middle-class approach to the series which the modern show tries to avoid. Adams does repeat some of his gags and though you may find the conversations charming, others may find them uninvolved. They are very much the meat of the story too, because once we get to the actual plot—somewhere around Part Three - it's very much your standard stuff hindered by awkward geography. Everyone seems to be walking around from one place to another!

There are some lumbering monsters, the Krargs, which are better than the Nimon, but not by much, and the supposedly futuristic spaceships look tacky. Skagra as portrayed by Christopher Neame is an archetypal villain of the era but lacks the smart touches that make the likes of Harrison Chase or Marcus Scarman so memorable.

The animation is good with strong impressions of the characters without slavishly trying to capture exact likenesses and excellent use of colour though it struggles to convey movement. One thing that does work better than you'd think is using the casts voices as they are in modern times for these scenes. Seeing it interspersed with live action in studio on video and location work on film makes for a somewhat disconcerting experience

though. It does look as if they've treated the studio footage with something to make it a closer match for the outdoor filming but they don't use that for the animation.

I have to say that during the last half hour I was getting bored by the story because the writing creates a threat and concepts that don't appear to affect anyone except the people involved. In the end it feels like watching a party you haven't been invited to. However, if you stick with it to the end the cherry on the cake is the lovely scene featuring the Tom Baker circa 2017 once again in scarf and coat in the TARDIS.



THE LEISURE HIVE

Review by Mark Donaldson

As the first story in Tom Baker's final season, 'The Leisure Hive' is loaded with metaphor. Ravaged by a bitter nuclear conflict and embracing new technologies to survive, Argolis is a strong metaphor for Doctor Who in the transitional period between Graham Williams and John Nathan-Turner. The increasingly irascible Tom Baker may as well be David Haig's Pangol, the hot-headed traditionalist who fiercely resists change. As if to hammer the point home, Pangol is aged back into a child at the end of 'The Leisure Hive', while Tom Baker regenerates into a far younger model at the end of Doctor Who season 18.

If Tom Baker is Pangol, then he sees John Nathan-Turner as the Foamasi who wish to buy out the Leisure Hive. Baker sees JN-T's changes as vulgar, much in the same way that Pangol believes that the proposed buy-out puts the future of the Leisure Hive, and Argolis at serious risk. It's hardly surprising that Baker and JN-T clashed with each other during season 18. Tom Baker and JN-T are the very personification of the terms "unstoppable force" and "immovable object", and so their enmity was inevitable.

In his defence, it's easy to see why Tom Baker felt threatened by John Nathan-Turner's arrival. In just the first five minutes, the JN-T era murders K-9 and shackles the so-called bohemian Doctor in a burgundy and question mark uniform. Baker often looks swamped by his

costume in 'The Leisure Hive', a metaphor for how his influence was being drowned out by JN-T's innovations. This metaphor becomes more pronounced later in 'The Leisure Hive' when the Fourth Doctor is rapidly aged. Seeing an already gaunt-looking Tom Baker in long grey beard and wig gives the sense that he no longer fits into JN-T's modern vision for Doctor Who. Long before 'Logopolis', it's clear that the Cloister Bell is sounding for Tom Baker's time as the Fourth Doctor.

However, contrary to the supposed funereal tone of Doctor Who season 18, Tom Baker is still a charismatic presence. His beaming and reassuring smile after the horrific end of the Part One cliffhanger when he's seemingly torn limb from limb is a delight. So too is his "take me to his mother" riff, which proves that while Baker may be at the end of his long scarf by this point, he's not going down without a fight.

That's not to say that descriptions of season 18 and 'The Leisure Hive' as funereal are wrong. Far from it, Baker is clearly more muted in his performance of the Doctor by this point. That's likely because he knows that this is the end of the greatest role of his life, and the one that continues to define him to this day. Mark Gatiss could write an incredibly powerful drama about the making of Tom Baker's final season of Doctor Who, if only there was an actor out there capable of capturing the great man's unique personality. The sym-

metry of Barry Letts casting Tom and then executive producing his final season certainly forms a neat bridging narrative.

Season 18's executive producer, Barry Letts, is 'The Leisure Hive's ageing Morix, Doctor Who's old guard, lured back to ensure the show's survival. It was Letts who commissioned David Fisher's story, rather than script editor Christopher H. Bidmead. As a Buddhist, there's clearly something appealing to Letts about 'The Leisure Hive's story of regeneration and rebirth. Mena and Pangol are given a second chance at life by the end of the story, and can therefore right the wrongs of their past lives. During Barry Letts' Doctor Who tenure, he was keenly aware of the show's capacity to respond to the world around it. Letts' Doctor Who tackled the miner's strike, the UK becoming part of the European Economic Community, and climate change long before it became a pressing issue. This approach chimed with incoming script editor Christopher

H. Bidmead, a modernist and keen reader of New Scientist, who sought to bring back hard science to Doctor Who.

It's arguable if Bidmead ever really achieved this, after all, a planet full of mathematicians doing sums to keep the universe in balance feels less like science and more like magic. However, Bidmead's fascination with new scientific theories rejuvenated Doctor Who, and changed the types of stories it could tell. It starts in 'The Leisure Hive', with tachyonics, zero gravity and futuristic leisure facilities. Bidmead's approach was fully supported by John Nathan-Turner, who wanted to move away from the slightly smug "I'll explain later" approach of previous seasons.

John Nathan-Turner's modernist vision for Doctor Who draws comparisons with 'The Leisure Hive's Mena, who embraces new technologies to ensure the future of Argolis. Ever the showman, John Nathan-Turner's glitzy new starfield title sequence, bold costume



choices, and synthy Doctor Who theme tune assert that 'The Leisure Hive' is the start of a brand new era.

Peter Howell's arrangement of the Doctor Who theme is almost as memorable as Delia Derbyshire's original, heralding an exciting new era as the show stares down the end of its second decade. Howell's score for 'The Leisure Hive' is equally memorable and modern, perfectly meeting JN-T's brief of Jean-Michel Jarre and revolutionising Doctor Who's incidental music in the process. The electronic score for 'The Leisure Hive' is evocative and feels of a piece with the work of cinematic composer Vangelis, giving Doctor Who an incredibly modern feel. The success of Peter Howell's theme tune arrangement and score for 'The Leisure Hive' proves that the main issue with the JN-T era was people not understanding the brief. Howell responds to JN-T's brief for the music and revitalises the sound of Doctor Who. Sadly, the same can't be said for some of his contemporaries, or certain script editors that would later serve

under John Nathan-Turner.

For good or ill, everything that would define John Nathan-Turner's Doctor Who is on full display in 'The Leisure Hive'. It's incredibly colourful, from the burnt orange and pinks of the irradiated surface of Argolis to the sparkly green costuming of the Foamasi. 'The Leisure Hive' is also impeccably cast, from Sexton Blake star Laurence Payne to A Clockwork Orange's Adrienne Cori. For good or ill, colours, casting, and colourful casting would become hallmarks of the JN-T era.

One thing that John Nathan-Turner doesn't always get credit for is his use of locations. There is fundamentally no need for the Doctor and Romana to start 'The Leisure Hive' on Brighton beach, but doing so establishes the funereal mood of season 18. The long pan across an empty pebble beach is a haunting image, and the type of bravura cinematic flourish that isn't always associated with 1980s Doctor Who. In conceiving the sequence JN-T was sup-



posedly inspired by Luchino Visconti's 1971 film, *Death in Venice*. This is an incredibly astute reference point, given the shared themes between Tom Baker's ailing Fourth Doctor and Dirk Bogarde's ailing composer, Gustav von Aschenbach. Visconti's film ends with Gustav quietly passing away in his deck chair as the youthful Tadzio heads toward the water. The allusion to *Death in Venice* in season 18's opening shot is, therefore, an incredible piece of foreshadowing for the Fourth Doctor's death.

While it's a step too far to draw comparisons between Matthew Waterhouse's Adric and Björn Andrésen's Tadzio, there are further links between *Death in Venice* and 'The Leisure Hive'. Although Gustav's fascination with Tadzio is deeply uncomfortable, it's clear that there is more going on than predatory behaviour. As a dying man who is full of regrets, Gustav is fascinated by Tadzio because he represents youth. There's a vicarious element to the way that Gustav watches the young boy engage in horseplay on the beach and enjoying the extravagant meals at the hotel.

John Nathan-Turner drawing a link between Gustav's grasping for youth in *Death in Venice*, and the fight against the ravages of ageing in 'The Leisure Hive' show that he's a producer who is engaged in the scripts. There's a sense that JN-T was something of a frustrated creative, emphasized by his regular directorial efforts in pantomime, and his hands-on approach to outlining the storylines for each season of Doctor Who. His inclusion of the *Death in Venice* homage in 'The Leisure Hive' is, therefore, another early moment that

would become emblematic of his Doctor Who era.

For all the positive changes that 'The Leisure Hive' signals, the broadcast of the story also foreshadows Doctor Who's own change in fortunes during the 1980s. JN-T's first story as producer is also the first time that Doctor Who fell out of the top 100 TV shows of the week. This was due to ITV's decision to directly compete with the BBC's teatime sci-fi show by screening *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* in the same timeslot.

For all John Nathan-Turner's laudable attempts to modernise Doctor Who for a 1980s audience, *Buck Rogers* on ITV demonstrated that they were too little too late. The pressures to compete with modern sci-fi would plague JN-T throughout the mid to late 1980s, and the show routinely fell short of matching up to the competition. Like the *Watcher* on London Tower Bridge, the impact of *Buck Rogers* on the ratings for 'The Leisure Hive' was a troubling sign of things to come. And yet for all the doomy portent and cracks in the veneer of the Tom Baker era, 'The Leisure Hive'

is a lot of fun. The more serious, hard science approach of Christopher H. Bidmead may have softened David Fisher's



satirical edges when it comes to the decline of the British seaside, but it still has its moments of charm.

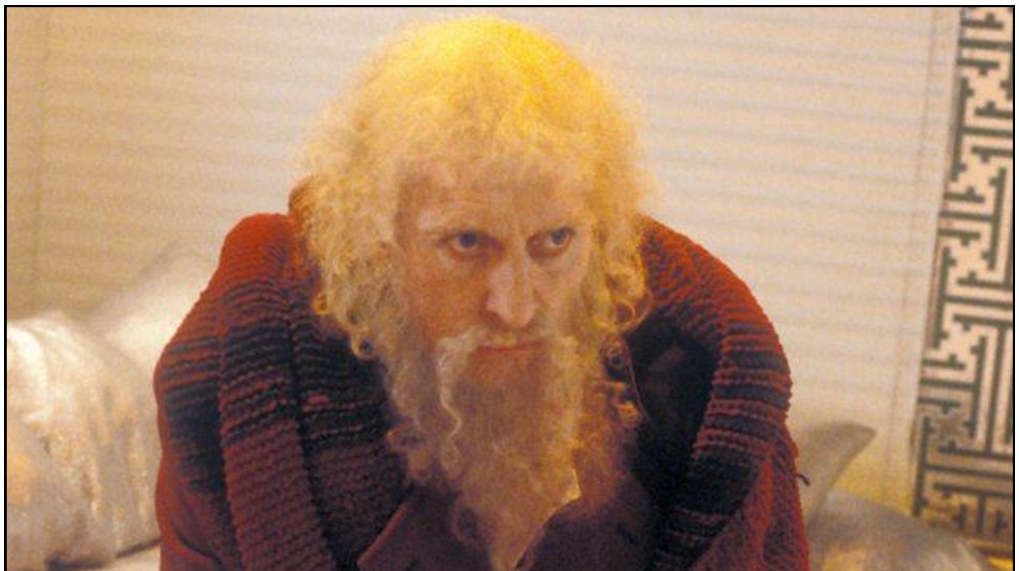
The Fourth Doctor and Romana floating through the Zero-G squash court, the Doctor's clone army, the ridiculousness of the Foamasi, all of these moments mean that 'The Leisure Hive' never focuses on Tom's gaunt features and grey beard for too long. More than that, the changes that John Nathan-Turner bring in for 'The Leisure Hive' and season 18 enable Doctor Who to survive the loss of its longest-serving leading man.

It's something of a cliché, but Doctor Who is all about change and renewal. By beginning Tom Baker's final season with a story about an ageing populace rejuvenating itself and building a more hopeful future, Barry Letts, Christopher H. Bidmead and John Nathan-Turner begin shepherding Doctor Who into its third decade. Not only that, but 'The Leisure Hive' is responsible for indirectly inspiring one of the 21st century's biggest TV hits.

Strange as it may seem, 'The Leisure Hive' was a huge influence on Black Mirror creator Charlie Brooker. Writing in his Guardian column several years ago, (and again in the charity book Behind the Sofa) he recalled that:

"...Tom Baker appears in some kind of primitive VR machine, gets his arms and legs torn off and screams – the camera zoomed in on his bellowing mouth, the scream blended with the already-terrifying closing title music, and my spine scuttled out of my backside and ran for the nearest exit. Couldn't walk for six months. Cheers, Doctor."

Received wisdom has it that Doctor Who in the 1980s lacked the spine-tingling horror of Tom Baker's early years under Phillip Hinchcliffe and Robert Holmes. However, that's clearly not true, as Charlie Brooker will attest. To that end, 'The Leisure Hive' is proof of one thing – that the more things change when it comes to Doctor Who, the more they stay the same.



MEGLOS

Review by Russell Sandberg

There is something about the final series of each Doctor that makes each of those particular sets of episodes ripe for reappraisal. By contrast, there is often some consensus about the first series or more specifically the debut of each Doctor; whether they hit the ground running, whether it is a new era or whether it is designed to stress the otherwise continuity of the programme, reassuring the audience that only the face has changed. Most debuts are seen as being successful in achieving their particular aim.

The difference perhaps is that everyone knows that the first series is just that - that Doctor's first series. By contrast, the status of a series as a final series can sometimes be a surprise depending on when the actor's departure is announced (and on occasion depending on when the actor actually decides to go). So, the benefit of hindsight looms large on a re-watch, and often leads to a reappraisal.

However, there is more to it than that. While the debut of a Doctor is judged as to whether it was a great start, judging whether something is an appropriate ending depends much more on the opinion taken on the episodes that have led up to this. A final series can satisfy when it leaves the audience wanting more or can also satisfy when there is an appetite for change and perhaps a feeling that the regeneration might possibly be overdue.

Tom Baker's final series is perhaps the most debated and reappraised final series of all the Doctors. This reflects his unmatched longevity in the role, and also the significant changes that occurred at the start of what would be his final season. This was evident in the new opening sequence and costume for the Doctor as well as behind the scenes in a new executive producer and a new approach to the show: a move away from the perceived 'undergraduate humour' of the last few seasons towards a harder science fiction approach. This led to the conclusion that this was perhaps one season too many for the Fourth Doctor as he was radically retooled for a new era. As every trapping of the previous regime was removed (some gradually throughout the season), the Fourth Doctor ironically enough looked like a man out of time.

Whether this reboot was a good thing has divided commentators. Douglas Adams' later reputation has led to a positive reappraisal of the previous series. Indeed, in the popular imagination, Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor is now often remembered as the comical eccentric figure of that era; the grin and the jelly babies. Yet, that does the Fourth Doctor an injustice. Throughout his long era, he was a much more complicated figure than that. He could be sullen one minute, manic the next; utterly unpredictable; truly alien.

Baker's final series is more jarring when compared with the stereotypical, nos-

talgic, cartoonish misremembering of the Fourth Doctor. In this analysis, Season 18 was a season too many for Tom Baker, with the Fourth Doctor being left lost in a programme that had dramatically changed to try to compete (unsuccessfully as it turned out) with the comparatively slick US science fiction output.

Yet, this analysis changes if you appreciate that Baker's performance was as multi-dimensional as the Fourth Doctor's scarf was multi-coloured. Removing the lens of hindsight from which we know that the end is looming (and was prepared for), it becomes clear that for all the stylistic changes in season 18, there is also a great deal of continuity – and a great deal of variety. Baker is not solemn throughout; rather, his Doctor is as varied as he was in his earlier seasons. And the move away from the programme's past, including a perceived tone of 'undergraduate humour', is not as absolute as many assume. 'Meglos', the second serial in Season 18, is evidence of this. It is the one with the giant cactus for an enemy, who takes on

the form of the Fourth Doctor – meaning that Tom Baker is spikier than ever. It is curiously unloved, appearing at the bottom of Fourth Doctor stories in Doctor Who Magazine polls alongside 'The Horns of Nimon' and 'Underworld'. 'Meglos' is seen as a throwback; a comedic script developed under the previous regime that was repurposed and made as if it was serious drama.

However, I would argue not only that 'Meglos' is an underrated story but that it actually brings together many of the successful elements found in the Fourth Doctor's era. This questions the received wisdom about the extent of change found within Season 18 and the claim that Tom Baker no longer fitted in the show. There are ten reasons why 'Meglos' is an essential and quintessential Fourth Doctor adventure:

1. First and perhaps foremost in terms of reasons for defending the maligned 'Meglos' is Tom Baker's performance. Baker was not the first and would not be the last Doctor to play his own evil doppelganger, but his performance is



extraordinary. He does not rely on a particular characteristic, quirk or even mood to distinguish the two parts. Rather, Baker's 'Meglos' is as multifaceted and real as his Fourth Doctor. There is a menacing focused look behind the eyes, which is sometimes also present in his Doctor. Baker's performance as the Doctor in this story is also exemplary. In the early TARDIS scenes, he goes from sullen to manic and while doing both he dominates the scene. Baker was ill during recording, but it would be wrong to attribute the Doctor's morose mood to this. It is rather a trait that can be seen in his earliest television appearances. The Fourth Doctor's alienness means that he can at times be a scary figure. The frequent plot device that he has visited the planet before adds a sense of scale and history to the character and allows Baker to have fun with this element of the script. He is as hilarious here as he was in Season 17.

2. 'Meglos' makes interesting use of the companions. Although the focus of the story is not on them, Romana and K9 are not relegated to the sidelines. The TARDIS scenes in the first episode neatly encapsulate the relationship between the Doctor and Romana. Then, later on, her battle with the plants is a textbook companion scene from which she ultimately saves herself. K9 is also not left in the TARDIS and in addition to being in action mode is also given several amusing lines.

3. Apart from the evil cactus and Tom Baker being covered in spikes, 'Meglos' is probably best remembered for the return of Jacqueline Hill who played Barbara, one of the original companions, but who here plays Lexa. This explains why this relatively minor charac-

ter was often depicted on the covers of home media versions of the story. Hill delivers a solid performance, establishing that actors can play different characters in the series over time, showing how forward-looking it was at this point, not limited by nostalgia.

4. Like a lot of the stories in the Tom Baker era, 'Meglos' has what I would call a proper villain. 'Meglos' is undeniably evil but also thoroughly entertaining. This is so not only when Tom Baker is playing him but also when others are too. 'Meglos' remains the same megalomaniac and there is something very appealing and satisfying about this.

5. In part, the reason why 'Meglos' works as a villain is because he is accompanied by funny henchmen. Grugger and Brotadac make the kind of double act and secondary characters that Robert Holmes excelled at. And the use of anagrams for names, a feature common to many Doctor Who stories, can also be found here. However, rather than as a means to disguise a familiar returning character in the Radio Times listings, the anagram here is for the writers' own amusement. Brotadac is an anagram of 'bad actor', intended as a judgment on the character rather than the actor's performance.

6. The theme of religion and science once more appears in this story with the supernatural element being represented by the Deons whose chanting and general behaviour is not dissimilar to the Sisterhood of Karn and other be-robed groups. This brings a further dimension to the tension on the planet.

7. Although the final episode wraps up the story, the escape of 'Meglos' means

that the threat is unresolved in a pleasing way. The story feels as if it is adding to the mythology of the programme and raises the prospect of a return at some point.

8. More so than many Fourth Doctor adventures, 'Meglos' does the quintessentially Doctor Who thing of making everyday experiences scary. I don't just mean that it will change the way in which you look at a cactus in the same way that other stories affected how daffodils and statues were seen. The link with Earth is stronger here than most stories that are set on other planets. This feels very similar to the first Russell T. Davies era. The culture shock experienced by the Earthling who is being experimented on, feels very Douglas Adams. It almost feels like a greatest hits album.

9. Yet, 'Meglos' is no mere throwback. It does have some connections to the harder science fiction that was to come to the fore in later Season 18 serials. The well-explained and executed time loop in Part One can be seen as preparing the audience for the discussion of entropy that was to come. The amount of time taken to explaining and illustrating that time loop shows a determination to treat the explanations and the science seriously.

10. A further way in which 'Meglos' looks to the future of Doctor Who can be found in its scale and pace. It looks unlike any other story, with the first and only use of Scene Sync instead of CSO, used (not entirely successfully) to depict desert planets that feel very *Star Wars*-like. The over-use of such experimental special effects might explain in part its unpopularity. 'Underworld' is

pilloried for similar reasons. Yet, it shows an ambition - a show not resting on its laurels. The same is true of the pace of the story. Although the scripts under-ran, they are packed with ideas - almost a mashup of what a Doctor Who adventure should be like - and they do not follow the conventional story format. The Doctor spends most of Part One in the TARDIS, for instance. This is a serial that subverts expectations whilst bringing together (sometimes haphazardly) dimensions that sum up the Fourth Doctor's era.

Had 'Meglos' appeared in any of the other Fourth Doctor seasons, then it would have a very different reputation. Its curiously unloved status comes from the way in which it does not seem to fit with our ideas of what Season 18 is all about. The fact that Season 18 is Tom Baker's last, and the significant changes present in 'The Leisure Hive' and the final adventures of the season, make 'Meglos' appear to be the odd one out. Yet, this conventional account underappreciates the degree of continuity found within Season 18. Tom Baker is not a man out of time; rather his final season like so many of his seasons displays the full ambit, tone and ambition of the series. 'Meglos', therefore, provides a summation of elements of the Fourth Doctor's adventures, as a whole, part of a final hurrah before the funereal atmosphere kicks in. Plus, it has an evil cactus in it - which should be persuasive enough for its rehabilitation.



FULL CIRCLE

Review by Andrew Smith

More than forty-three years have passed since I wrote 'Full Circle' for Season 18 of Doctor Who, but the memories remain fresh.

I was seventeen years old when I was commissioned to write that script in 1980, but I'd been chipping away at becoming a writer for television since I was fourteen. I wasn't only interested in writing for Doctor Who, but the great advantage of that series was that it was ALWAYS THERE. Doctor Who was a television fixture throughout the 1970s. It was on the nation's TV screens for six months or so of every year.

So, although I occasionally pitched scripts/ideas to other series, with encouraging responses (I remember a very nice exchange with Robert Banks Stewart while he was producing the detective series Shoestring), those programmes typically had short shelf lives of one or two series.

Also, being a bona fide fan (which I tried unsuccessfully to keep quiet), I knew the series well.

I submitted my first Doctor Who idea as a full 4-part script to Robert Holmes in the spring of 1977. I can't remember a thing about this story, but his response was encouraging. He suggested I try writing for other outlets, fully original pieces for series such as one of the TV play outlets that were around at the time. I replied that if he didn't mind, I'd like to continue to submit ideas, and he

sent me details of a book called Writing for Television in the 70s by (former Doctor Who writer) Malcolm Hulke. I got the book, and it was an invaluable resource. It was full of priceless screen-writing advice, and several examples of produced scripts (including the opening of the Jon Pertwee serial 'Carnival of Monsters'). Simply being able to produce a typewritten script – I taught myself to type at the age of seven – in the correct BBC format was a great help in presenting my writing.

I then submitted another full script to Anthony Read, who was again very encouraging and returned my script with pencilled annotations. When Douglas Adams became script editor, he invited me down for a chat during the studio recording of 'Creature from the Pit', which again was extremely encouraging and helpful, and he gave me a number of pointers – while also buying me my very first alcoholic drink, a lager (which I couldn't finish), in the BBC Club.

One idea I submitted to Douglas was a storyline titled 'The Planet That Slept',



and that was sitting in the script editor's in-tray when Chris Bidmead took over the role. We spoke on the phone in very early 1980 and Chris was as encouraging as his predecessors had been. However, he told me it would be impractical for me to write for the show as I lived too far away (Glasgow). I was very disappointed, even crestfallen. But in the same conversation Chris invited me down to his office, as Douglas had done, to chat about what I might do to progress my writing ambitions.

When I arrived and before I had even sat down in his office, Chris told me that he and John (Nathan-Turner) wanted to commission me to write a script for the first episode of 'The Planet That Slept', and if they liked it they would commission a scene breakdown and scripts for the remaining episodes.

I couldn't believe it.

A very smiley me then had a script meeting with Chris and John. I was told I would be introducing a new companion, another bonus for me, a young lad by the name of Adric. Chris had written a very broad one-page outline in which Adric was described as a member of a street gang whose brother would die saving the Doctor. Adric wasn't a fit for any character in my outline, nor was a street gang an obvious addition, but we worked on the scenario until hitting on the notion of the Outlers as a gang of teenage misfits led by Adric's brother.

We worked through other story elements, and I returned to Glasgow to write that first episode. I can't remember for sure, but it may be that I wrote a scene breakdown in the first instance (effectively a scene-by-scene descrip-

tion, to give an idea of not just the structure of the episode but also its cost, with numbers of sets, film content versus studio, size of cast and suchlike). The scripts were typewritten with two carbon copies. I sent off two copies to Chris, and then had the most nervous week of my life awaiting the response.

At the end of that week, Chris called and said, 'We love it, and we're commissioning the other three episodes.' I was to write scene breakdowns for episodes 2 to 4, with scripts to follow, after notes on those breakdowns.

I may have done a little dance after putting the phone down.

It was actually happening – I'd been commissioned to write a TV script, and for Doctor Who, which felt unreal. Three years of plugging away, with help and advice from successive script editors, and ultimately a leap of faith from Chris and John, had led to this. Now I just needed not to screw it up.

I knuckled down to writing the breakdowns and submitting them, and then the first drafts of the episodes. I remember a note on the first drafts from Chris that I'd gone too far with the mistreatment of the Marshchild – who at that point was a young Marshwoman.



I'd written what amounted to a torture scene with Omril tormenting her, I think with an electrical rod, which absolutely was going too far for Doctor Who.

One scene that was in the script from the start is where K9 has his head knocked off by the Marshmen. It wasn't something I'd been asked to include, as has been suggested over the years. I wasn't a K9 fan I'm afraid. John Leeson did – and still does – a wonderful job with the character, but I reckon I was two or three years too old to appreciate what it brought to the series.

I wrote a second draft, then Chris had a pass where he made some changes. He said these were mainly for length, as the scripts were about 30% too long (I still have a tendency to overwrite, but I now self-edit before submitting a draft), but he may have been being kind in part.

I was present throughout location filming and the studio recordings, which was invaluable in building my knowledge of how a television production was put together. This was something that JNT helped me with; during one studio day he arranged for me to sit in with Terence Dudley on an editing session for 'Meglos'.

At the end of the last day of the second recording block, time was running out and there were a number of scenes still to be shot. John asked if there was anything I thought could be dropped, and I made a couple of suggestions. There was a scripted scene of Romana entering the ventilation duct she uses to get to the Science Unit, which I reckoned we could do without. At home a few days later, I received a very nice phone

call from John thanking me for saving the production valuable time (and at least some overtime) that night.

There were still a couple of items to be recorded once time ran out, but these were very short – for example, a Starliner citizen operating a computer. They were shot without sound, meaning the sound boom operators could be sent home – without incurring overtime – and the sound dubbed on later.

I mentioned how helpful John was in helping me build my knowledge of television production. He did another very kind thing.

Back home in Glasgow, between the two studio sessions, my parents had learned from an insurance rep they dealt with that his 12-year-old nephew was a huge Doctor Who fan. His nephew also suffered from Downs Syndrome. Once I was back in the studio, I mentioned this in passing to John. He went away and returned with a polaroid camera and a copy of the new Doctor Who annual – so new it wasn't yet in the shops. He told me to collect autographs in the annual, and to take some photographs of Tom and the rest of the cast that could also be signed, to take back to this young lad. I delivered the annual and photographs to the young fan at his Glasgow home a few days later. He was over the moon. It was an act of kindness by John I'll never forget.

A couple of months later, 'Full Circle' (as 'The Planet That Slept', fairly late in the day, had been renamed) was aired. It was quite something to see the caption 'By Andrew Smith' appear. I remember thinking at one point that younger me who had watched Jon Pertwee's Doctor

so avidly in the early 70s would not have believed that a story of mine would be part of the series.

'Full Circle' wasn't my first writing to appear on TV. I'd written a couple of quickie sketches for the topical comedy series *Not The Nine O'clock News* that had aired earlier in the year (though written after my *Doctor Who*). But it was of course my first major script, and I was thrilled with what everyone on the production had done with it.

I'd go on to write plays for TV and radio, more comedy sketches for radio and TV (I was part of the main writing team on two series of *A Kick Up The 80s* starring such new talent as Rik Mayall and Robbie Coltrane), comic strips, and the novelisation of 'Full Circle' for Target Books. That was another thing little me wouldn't have believed – that one day I'd write a Target novelisation. I'd been reading them since 1975 – they were how we revisited the programme before VHS tapes came along. I was also commissioned to write a story for a season 19 called *The Torsan*

Triumvirate. I don't have the paperwork for that and all I can remember about is that it involved three aliens (*Torsans*, I expect) living as humans on different parts of the Earth who planned to bring three parts of some alien device together for nefarious purposes. That was commissioned by Chris but unfortunately didn't go beyond the scene breakdown stage after Antony Root came in as script editor.

In 1983 Eric Saward asked me to come down to see him, took me to lunch and asked me to write a Sontaran story for the Sixth Doctor. I came up with *The First Sontarans*, but again this only got to the scene breakdown stage; Robert Holmes' story 'The Two Doctors' took its place. Happily, I kept hold of the storyline and scene breakdown for *The First Sontarans* and was delighted to be asked to write it up as an audio adventure for Colin and Nicola as part of *Big Finish's Lost Stories* range in 2012. It remains one of my personal favourite stories.

I had been studying law when I was



commissioned to write for Doctor Who, and dropped out to concentrate on my writing. I had chosen law because I had been interested in a career in the police, since a police officer had come to my secondary school to deliver a careers talk. After four years of writing, always with a commission to work on, I found the life too solitary. I also wanted to live my life more and find some excitement.

I joined the police in London in 1984. At Hendon Police College I wrote what I thought was a very funny sketch for the Christmas concert, with a fictional Deputy Assistant Commissioner delivering a comedy monologue. It went down a treat with the audience. Not so much with the deputy head of the College, who threatened me with the sack. No sense of humour. I refused to write anything outside my regular duties from that point, and refused to be a speech writer for an Area Commander when I was approached by his staff a year later.

The (not very) welcoming words from my District Chief Superintendent when I was posted to Lambeth were, "Right son. Are you here for a career or are you here to write a book?". I told him, a career. And there followed two years of being asked whether I was going to leave and write that book, until my colleagues seemed to accept that I might actually be serious about a police career.

I continued to write, but for myself. I threw myself into my police career and had an amazing time. It gave me much more than I expected; excitement – it was at times maybe a little too exciting, but that had its own buzz – and a real sense of helping people. I spent most of my thirty-year career in counter terror-

ism, in which the UK police and intelligence community is truly world class. I retired in 2014 as a Chief Inspector, having worked throughout my time with the most amazing and impressive teams of officers and staff, and partners in other agencies.

And here I am, writing Doctor Who again, among other things.

In 2010 I was a guest at a Doctor Who convention in Glasgow, along with David Richardson and Nick Briggs, who asked me if I'd be interested in writing for Big Finish. A couple of months later I was writing my first script 'The Invasion of E-Space'. My next was The First Sontarans. I've gone on to write around thirty or forty scripts since, and have been script editor on the UNIT, Survivors and Star Cops ranges.

You might say (and you wouldn't believe, or maybe you would, how often people have used this phrase with me over the years) I've come Full Circle.



STATE OF DECAY

Review by Owen Taylor

'State of Decay' has always held a very special place in my love of Doctor Who. Not because it is an outstanding story in an era of absolute classics, spoilers - it is not; nor because it adds more layers to the Time Lord mythos as many stories did in this period. It is because in those early years of the 1980s it was one of the few stories in an era before VHS and repeats on TV, that could be enjoyed again and again - on an audio cassette read by Tom Baker himself. I loved those eerie sounds that opened the story, conjuring up the alienness of E-Space; I loved its Hammer Horror-style vampire story and its linguistic investigation of the derivation of names. Indeed, having received the tape for Christmas I wore it remarkably quickly.

It would be nearly two decades before I got to watch 'State of Decay' on television and to appreciate fully just how out of place this story was in the Fourth Doctor's final season of adventures, which saw the transition from the 70s past and into JNT's brave new 80s vision of high cinema and hard science.

The Doctor and Romana, unaware that Adric has stowed aboard the TARDIS at the conclusion of their previous adventure 'Full Circle' arrive on a planet which shows signs of having a history of technology, but which has regressed to a medieval, pre-industrial civilisation. Here they discover the Three Who Rule, the officers of an Earth spaceship, which crashed here long ago, who have

survived for millennia by becoming vampires, under the influence of The Great One, the last survivor of a race of giant bat-like vampires, defeated in a war by the Time Lords in the legendary Old Times. He escaped into E-Space and is buried beneath the castle of the Three Who Rule, which is, in fact, the remains of their spaceship. The three Lords where they feed The Great One on the blood of sacrificial victims, chosen from among the subject population, who are themselves descended from the lower ranks of the crashed ship.

Adric is tempted (of course) by the three Vampire Lords, but the Doctor and Romana succeed in rescuing the boy, defeating the Three Who Rule, destroying the Old One and liberating the villagers, before continuing their adventures, still in search of a way back to N-Space.

This story is a piece riven with the struggles that were gripping the show at the time. Originally devised by Terrance Dicks for Season 15, and featuring Leela as the Doctor's companion, it was abandoned, as the BBC Drama department felt that the story clashed with an adaptation of Bram Stoker's 'Dracula', that was in preparation at the time. It was only when new script editor Christopher Bidmead went looking for usable scripts in a pile of older discarded ones, that it was revived as a viable story. Renamed 'The Wasting' it was offered to director Peter Moffat and then became the focus of a battle

of wills, as it was renamed 'State of Decay' and then substantially rewritten by Bidmead. In fact, this rewrite nearly stopped production altogether, as Moffat didn't recognise the new story as the one that he had signed on to do and threatened to walk away. Dicks' original script was brought back although with the new title. However, the original name survives in the dialogue, with nearly every main character uttering "the Wasting!" at some point during the story.

It stands out in the E-Space Trilogy in terms of production, feeling far more like a product of the Hinchliffe and Holmes era, with its forest setting and a peasant population ruled by merciless lords with a penchant for blood. While the previous story had a base under siege by Marshmen, here the story feels firmly Hammer Horror and could sit happily alongside 'The Talons of Weng Chaing', 'Horror of Fang Rock' and 'Image of the Fendahl'. The change of

companion, from Leela to Romana II affects the introduction of Adric as an ongoing companion. He is barely seen in Parts Two and Three, with the Doctor unaware of him for much of the story. Romana is also sidelined to a degree and is mostly used for verbal sparring throughout the story and for expressing general admiration of the Doctor, a change to the equal status that she enjoys in other stories. The scene in which she demonstrates the linguistic change in names is awkward as is Christopher Bidmead's insertion of an explanation, referring to the Brothers Grimm's theory of consecutive chain shifts in language. The added tension of the two stars' off-screen relationship can also be glimpsed.

Most of the story is standard fare, stretched over four episodes with much marching back and forth through woods, as the pair escape various captures and encounters. It does however bring a new element to the mythos of



Gallifrey's history as we hear of a great war, led by Rassilon against a race of giant vampires. We also discover that the TARDIS has historical directives hidden at its heart. Much of this is then forgotten or ignored for the remainder of the classic series, although has proven fertile ground for spin off novels and other media.

Is 'State of Decay' a classic? By no means, when looked at in isolation. It is however a reminder of the strengths of this era of Doctor Who - retelling a popular tale using the resources of the BBC. Our villains also give their all, in a series of delightfully over the top, at times Shakespearian performances. This all helps cover the somewhat lacklustre effects work, the castle is obviously a miniature, and the later space-ship detachment and vampire claw do not rank among the series' greatest

special effects. However, the final destruction of the Three Who Rule is expertly done as they wither and turn to dust.

The story is overly long and may have been better suited to the later three-part story format. It is though, a last hurrah, until 'The Visitation', of the pseudo-historical stories, before the more avant-garde high science stories become dominant.

'Warriors Gate', 'The Keeper of Traken' and 'Logopolis' may all deliver high mathematics and theories of space manipulation, but this tale takes one last bite out of a classic era. For me 'State of Decay' will never be a Wasting of my time.



WARRIORS' GATE

Review by Matt Hills

The end of the E-space trilogy, famed as much for its atmospheric visuals as for Steve Gallagher's world-building, is also a peculiarly mathematical Doctor Who story (and in this regard, perhaps only 'Logopolis' matches it). Inverting the standard action-adventure notion of closing with a countdown to ultimate peril, we instead begin with a countdown—albeit one where the decreasing numbers are muddled and disrupted. The opening mystery or hook on the soundtrack is therefore numerical. And the mathematical structure of the tale continues through into its emphasis on co-ordinates, which are locked off at zero. It's a curious way of doing parallel universes — a kind of 'bi-verse' rather than a multiverse, where you're either positive or negative, unless you're at zero (which becomes the only other kind of number; the "intersection" of N-space and E-space, as Adric suggests). So the Gateway and 'Warriors' Gate' are concerned with different universes, but in a sense that is related almost purely to integers rather than to the typically sentimental values of such stories in pop culture — this isn't about taking a different path in life, about what-ifs and never-weres, or emotional reunions displacing the real losses of life. It's not different universes as wish-fulfilment, nor even as a warning, in the style of 'Inferno', where the parallel world can show us an environmental or dystopic future that we, and the Doctor, need to avoid. Instead, 'Warriors' Gate' seems to literalise its mathematical concerns at a story level — it's

squarely about inversion: positive or negative co-ordinates become shaped into a question of whether the story's alien creatures, the leonine Tharils, should be understood as masters or slaves.

Narratively, this makes it a very strange kind of Doctor Who indeed. Rather than good battling evil, with the Doctor, Romana, Adric and K-9 (a very full TAR-DIS!) identifying and then taking action to defeat the forces of villainy — often represented through monstrous figures — here we get victims, enslaved time-sensitives, who have themselves been the oppressive masters of an empire. Behind the mirrors, the Doctor finds Tharils treating humanity as their property; 'they're only people', just as Rorvik and his crew treat the Tharils as nothing more than commodity cargo. The result is a story unusually marked by ambivalence, with 'good' and 'evil' being present, seemingly inseparably, in the Tharils. Their time wind powers have enabled them to dominate other races whilst also making them a target for slave-traders.

If a lot of Doctor Who (like most popular culture) works through a broadly Freudian process of 'splitting', in which good parts of the viewer's self can be projected onto 'good' characters who are identified with, and 'bad' parts of the watching self can be disowned by being projected onto evil characters who are vanquished and expelled by the storytelling, then 'Warriors' Gate'

doesn't play this game quite so neatly. In Freudian terms, ambivalence means being able to tolerate one's own 'good' and 'bad' impulses rather than seeking to falsely purify and celebrate the self as always 'good' through imaginative acts of psychological splitting. Such a recognition of ambivalence might be melancholic – surely a prime aesthetic note across season 18 of Doctor Who, and across this story and its void setting especially – but it supposedly has a greater maturity and self-awareness. The Tharils are a complex mixture of good and evil. Far from stereotyped 'Doctor Who monsters', they are perhaps sometimes more meaningfully human than the actual human characters of Rorvik's crew.

Yes, Rorvik does end up as the maniacally cackling 'baddie', so there is at least one conventionally monstrous figure to be destroyed at the end of Part Four. But even here, the Doctor doesn't actively beat the monster; in

line with the story's dalliance with mysticism and causality, he leaves Rorvik to self-destruct by simply doing nothing at the right time. The slave-traders, the human 'masters', are presumably reduced to literal nothingness by a 'mathematical vanishing' once their slaves have escaped into the Gateway, and once the "backblast backlash" has subsided. We might expect the Doctor to improvise a brilliant plan that makes all the difference, but his wisdom lies in knowing when to trust Biroc's guidance, and so deciding not to act. By contrast, Rorvik constantly attempts to use technological force to blast his way out of the void, whether via the MZ or the energies of a backblast; he's a blinkered doer, not a careful thinker. Unlike archetypal heroic figures – all strategies and skills – this version of the fourth Doctor ultimately leaves his enemies to defeat themselves. Though he ironically repeats Biroc's "the weak enslave themselves", as if to mock its naturalising of slavery, he nevertheless leaves Rorvik



to destroy himself and his crew by “finally getting something done”. Subconsciously, it would seem, the story’s villain has a death wish, and this is another Freudian trope, like ambivalence, that looms large in ‘Warriors’ Gate’.

It’s foreshadowed in an early TARDIS scene, of course, where Romana asks the Doctor if he has a death wish. This is after he’s very nearly killed them all by impulsively pressing a lethal control on the TARDIS console, in an attempt to carry out a non-determinate or purely random action. As this question of the Doctor’s potential death wish is raised, the camera slowly moves in on a two-shot of Romana and Doctor, framed against the TARDIS wall with the Doctor’s old scarf and coat visible on the coat-stand beside him. His changing nature, even within this incarnation, seems to hang over the discussion. For Freud, the death wish was an unconscious desire to avoid all the shifting, changing emotions and impulses of life — many of which led to distress and pain — in favour of embracing absolutely unchanging nothingness. In a story concerned so much with a zero point between positive and negative co-ordinates, the death wish therefore enjoys a marked thematic fit. Unending white nothingness could be a perfect visualisation of it, in fact. Even so, it’s striking that as an idea the Freudian death wish gets mentioned and set in play as a way of understanding later events, through the figure of the Doctor. Does the fourth Doctor really want everything to stop? To wish himself out of existence? However brooding he may appear at times, by the end of ‘Warriors’ Gate’ he shows the very opposite of a death wish, consciously embracing the change of Romana and K9’s

departure by musing that she’ll be “superb”. A moment of loss and potential pain is immediately transformed into optimism: as he similarly says of returning to N-space, “one good solid hope is worth a cartload of certainties”.

But still, the idea of an unconscious death wish particularly resonates with the Doctor at this juncture. We’re getting closer to his regeneration, with season 18 often being interpreted as depicting a more careworn and darker embodiment of the fourth Doctor. Gareth Roberts’ essay ‘Tom the Second’ (reprinted in *License Denied*) argues that ‘Warriors’ Gate’ is effectively the true end of the Graham Williams era, and that the JN-T years only really properly begin with ‘The Keeper of Traken’, after Romana and K9 have left the scene. But although ‘Warriors’ Gate’ is certainly caught up in the divestment of Williams-era elements, being something of a gateway itself, it seems clear enough that the moment of ‘Tom the Second’ so passionately defended by Roberts (seasons 15-17) has already passed here. If the first two Toms correspond to the newfound SF realism and horror pastiche or ‘high concept’ of the Hinchcliffe-Holmes era, and then to the self-referential, literary and comic-gothic tones of the Williams era (especially season 17 with Douglas Adams as script-editor), then we probably need to think about what characterises ‘Tom the Third’ under the creative guidelines of John Nathan-Turner and Christopher Bidmead. This colouration of the fourth Doctor is not just a tired shadow of his former self, as Philip MacDonald suggests in *The Complete Fourth Doctor: Volume 2*. It isn’t simply that Tom Baker’s performance is more muted and less energetically playful or

exuberant, though these things are accurate enough. And though it's possibly tempting to read 'Warriors' Gate', like 'State of Decay', in relation to behind-the-scenes tales and off-screen anecdotes, this also reduces the aesthetics and choices of screen performance to the lead actor's private life, which seems a fairly limiting frame. What can we say from the episodes as shown, where the question of the Doctor's death wish is perfectly seriously raised and discussed?

Well, this embodiment of the fourth Doctor seems not to always exist in the moment; he is detached, as if out of phase with the events occurring around him. This frequently manifests in his dissociated gaze, as he repeatedly looks across or out of the frame and past the camera rather than directly at his companions — and this is as true for Adric as it is for Romana. The result of all this looking over and outward is an emphasis on the Doctor's interiority or consciousness; at times, he feels more of a thinker (or already a watcher, even) rather than a doer, especially when compared to earlier and showier performances from the same actor. Such detachment also feels of a piece with elements of an unconscious death wish, though, as if this Doctor wishes he was already absent from the scene; there's a curious sense of self-disappearance at times. For example, the resolution of Part One's cliffhanger, where the Doctor eventually relies on the two Gundan warriors hitting each other, does seem to rely on a moment of trust in the arc of each axe's fall. Rather than coming across as spirited slapstick (which it could very easily have done), Baker plays the moment as though the Doctor has entirely surrendered to his fate, his

head impassively bowed and perfectly stilled, in a further indication of a Freudian death wish or a moment of self-negation.

Yet when he does survive, the Doctor breaks into a traditional grin; a flash of Baker's old-school charisma and charm surfaces. Earlier in his time as the fourth Doctor, these instances felt like a performance of alien-ness; they were part of the Doctor's Time Lord strangeness, and increasingly part of Baker's expansive, expressive nature as the show's star. Here, though, we seem to have again shifted mathematically from positive to negative, inverting the prior meanings of this acting tic so that in context it reads more as an alien-ness of performance, out of alignment with the surrounding tone of the show. This third iteration of the fourth Doctor also has his authority called into question, even more so than by season 17's frothy banter with Romana. As she pointedly tells him when she departs: "no more orders". And a confused K9 also spends much of the story plaintively asking for orders from his master, emphasising the Doctor's relative absence as an authority figure. Aged in 'The Leisure Hive', and impersonated by a doppelgänger in 'Meglos', this version of the fourth Doctor is repeatedly put through the wringer, with 'Warriors' Gate' adding an unusual degree of passivity to the equation. Biroc's time-sensitive nature makes him more knowledgeable about events, with the Doctor at times taking on the role of a companion asking questions, while the Doctor's appearance back in the banquet hall at the end of Part Three is also entirely accidental or magical rather than motivated by his own actions, even if it is described in scientific-

sounding jargon. And the denouement's confrontation between Doctor and villain is staged and shot in a highly atypical manner, with just the Doctor's head appearing at first at the feet of Rorvik — a striking visual sign of the Time Lord's ebbing authority, and the need to “do nothing”, as he's instructed by Biroc. It isn't just that Romana adopts or surpasses the standard narrative role of the Doctor in this story, as Elizabeth Sandifer has compellingly suggested in *TARDIS Eruditorum*, but also that ‘Tom the Third’ is partly displaced from the Doctor's usual narrative potency, haunted by a subconscious death wish and hemmed in by the need for well-timed inactivity.

Romana's infamous dismissal of the Doctor's consideration of a holistic universe, where even chance events can

have an important meaning, is the accusation that this amounts to nothing more than “astral Jung!” (Added to which, Lalla Ward's line delivery is a thing of joy). But through its emphasis on master-slave ambivalence rather than the splitting of obvious ‘good’ and ‘evil’, and through its concern with the death wish that seeks oblivion, if not a void of blank nothingness, ‘Warriors’ Gate’ is more than just a strangely mathematical tale. It's science fantasy meets astral Freud. And as a weirdly blanked-out setting for the performance decisions of ‘Tom the Third’, it makes — however unwittingly, or by synchronicity — a perfect vehicle for the detached ambivalences and self-disappearances of this era's disaffected stardom.



THE KEEPER OF TRAKEN

Review by William Joyce

"A new body ...at last..." we hear on the final moments of 'The Keeper of Traken' as the Master is reinvigorated with a new body. This establishes the Anthony Ainley Master we will see in the next adventure and throughout the rest of the Classic series run in the 1980's. Change and new beginnings is very much a theme and this penultimate Fourth Doctor adventure points the way towards the end of Tom Baker's iconic and successful seven-year run. This is the first story without the established Lalla Ward as Romana paving the way for newer companions who would support a new Doctor. 'The Keeper of Traken' is in many ways typical of season eighteen and is certainly one of the highlights of Christopher H Bidmead's tenure as script editor. Appointed in 1979 to replace outgoing Douglas Adams, he was keen to re-emphasise science at the core of the programme and move away from some of the fantasy and lighter comedic overtones so prevalent in the preceding season. Here we have a story with science, menace and the threat of 'all pervading evil'. Tom Baker's performance is more serious and this certainly adds to the dramatic impact as the story unfolds.

'The Keeper of Traken' was penned by first time Doctor Who writer Johnny Byrne who was identified as a potential script editor by incoming producer John Nathan Turner before Bidmead's appointment. Both were familiar with each other having worked together on 'All Creatures Great and Small' where

Nathan Turner was the Production Unit Manager. Johnny Byrne was an experienced scriptwriter having been one of the most prolific writers on Space:1999 so a logical candidate for Script Editor role, but he was unwilling to relocate from his Norfolk base. He did however suggest that he was interested in submitting a story idea which led to an initial meeting between Bidmead and Byrne early in 1980. The origins of the story developed from that meeting with Byrne's initial pitch of a society of 'Greys' and 'Blacks' in a Japanese inspired court interwoven within ideas of Millennialism where a period of upheaval and cataclysm follows every thousand years. The script developed as Byrne began shaping a compelling and believable alien pacifistic culture which would be the foundation of the finished story.

John Nathan-Turner (JNT) was keen to reintroduce an old foe we hadn't seen on our screens since 'The Deadly Assassin' in 1976 and this was worked into revisions with the introduction of The Master. He had been most recently played by the Opera singer Peter Pratt in an emaciated form at the end of his lives and Johnny Byrne's script gave ample opportunity to re-introduce the iconic character in a way that he could be relaunched as a semi-regular or recurring character. This addition enhanced an already promising script adding mystery to the seemingly alien presence at work. The script and programme hints that both us the viewer

and the Doctor have met this enemy before.

With script in place first time Who director John Black was assigned responsibility for 'The Keeper of Traken'. Black had gone freelance in the mid 1970's as a Director and had experience helming episodes of *Softly Softly*, *Play For Today* and *Coronation Street* amongst others. He was recommended by his girlfriend at the time Amy Roberts who had experience as Costume Designer on the programme before the current season working on Season Fifteen's 'Image of the Fendahl'. With Black appointed and his assembled team of Roberts and Tony Burrough as Designer the three set about developing the visuals which would go on to underpin the success of the finished programme. An art nouveau style to the sets and costumes was adopted which harked to the classic serials which had always

been such a fixture on the BBC and had been so well received. Gaudi inspired sets coupled with a Shakespearean flavour to the costumes of those within the "Traken Union" helped create both a futuristic and believable world for the characters to inhabit. The Melkur was a great example of the collaboration between Roberts and Burrough. The mysterious and unusual statue which the Master would use to ensnare Traken was based on the work of Italian painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni. The elements combined by the Production team to such success here and stand out as the best production and design of this last Tom Baker season. Tony Burrough's talent would lead on to him having a hugely successful career in Hollywood including being Oscar nominated in 1996 for his design work on *Richard III*.

Roger Limb's music score is memorable



and segments like 'Nyssa's theme' helps establish her character in the earliest scenes. His music fits the tone of the production perfectly. JNT's move away from Dudley Simpson gives a new flavour to the programme which is largely successful across the whole of the season. A number of new composers would have similar success to Roger Limb including Paddy Kingsland and Peter Howell. The shift in music was a clear strategic direction adopted by JNT moving away from the dated music and visuals of the previous year and included the addition of the new title sequence.

Director John Black began casting of the non-recurring characters for the story and whether intentional or not included a few with prior Doctor Who experience. The casting is another strength of the production and I would suggest one of best guest casts of the Tom Baker era. Stalwarts like Dennis Carey and John Woodnutt as well as Sheila Ruskin's more youthful manipulated Kassia are clearly enjoying the material and this is indicative of their performances which have conviction and believability. Dennis Carey (The Keeper) had been cast in Doctor Who the previous year in the aborted 'Shada' so only had a short time to wait to return. John Woodnutt (Seron) was another Doctor Who veteran appearing here for the fourth and final time. He had appeared memorably as 'Broton' in the classic 'Terror Of The Zygons' with Tom Baker only a few years prior. His performance is noteworthy as a supportive and loyal Traken member who is deceived and betrayed by Kassia. Sheila Ruskin is a standout in the story as Kassia and has some notable cliff hanger moments. It could be suggested

her loyalty to the Melkur is an element of the script which is less obviously developed but there is a sense of malevolence and duplicity the Master is using to manipulate and poison her... 'Oh no, Kassia... It is only beginning'... We see her unravel and ultimately lose her life in support of The Master's plans.

Another returning Doctor Who actor was Margot Van Der Bergh who had memorably played opposite William Hartnell's Doctor in 1964's 'The Aztecs' as Cameca. Here her performance as the experienced Katura on the Traken counsel balances well against the younger Luvic. She is wise and senses things are not what they seem. She knows her time to be Keeper has passed and enables Luvic in the closing moments of the story to ascend to become the new Keeper. Robin Soans who played Luvic would return to Doctor Who 34 years later in 'Face The Raven' with Peter Capaldi.

The legacy of the story is definitely one of 'new beginnings' not only with the return of the Master but also characters, actors and production team who would go on to both return and play an important role in the future of the programme. By this stage JNT was settling into life as producer and would go on to have the longest run of any, continuing until the end of the classic run in 1989. John Black would also return having impressed, directing the 'K9 & Company' Christmas special and Peter Davison's first adventure 'Four to Domsday' (though not televised first). Writer Johnny Byrne would return in the Davison era too though not with the same degree of success perhaps. Both 'Arc of Infinity' and 'Warriors of the Deep' had

their merits but were not as well realised on screen as here... re-appraisal of those another time! Johnny Byrne would return to TV after *Who* and helped create the long running show 'Heartbeat'.

From the cast perspective Sarah Sutton's introduction as Nyssa was clearly intended initially for this story. The potential in the character was noted by JNT and Sarah Sutton had proven quickly with her scenes with Matthew Waterhouse as Adric that both could work and bounce off each other effectively supporting the Doctor. It was established Nyssa and Sarah Sutton would return in 'Logopolis' with the death of Tremas (her father) and his body occupied by The Master a useful plot device. Sarah Sutton would continue successfully with Peter Davison's Doctor. Her scientific curiosity and compassion established in 'Traken' would feature throughout her tenure before she departed the Tardis in 1983. A fact supported by Peter Davison's belief she was most suited (and his favourite) companion for the Fifth Doc-

tor. Sarah Sutton has continued to play and develop the popular character over 40 years since her introduction on audio with *Big Finish*.

The return of the Master unusually introduces two actors in the story. Geoffrey Beevers takes over the mantle from Peter Pratt's Master. He was an experienced voice actor (a factor in John Black's decision to cast him) and as well as being Caroline John's husband had appeared during the Jon Pertwee era previously. His performance is effective and is a worthy equal of Tom Baker's Doctor in the climax to the programme. The viewer is in no doubt how much delight the Master has in relishing how evil he can be! It's a shame like with Derek Jacobi, 26 years later ('*Utopia*', 2007) we only get one chance (or story) to see Geoffrey Beevers in the role. This has been remedied through his return to the role in *Big Finish* and his Master and rich voice suits the radio medium perfectly.

'The Keeper of Traken' also introduces us to Anthony Ainley although not ini-



tially as the Master but as the Scientist (and Nyssa's father) Tremas. He was cast by JNT on the strength of his role in The Pallisers and was a respected TV and film character actor. As a result, he was well placed to take on the role of the Master more regularly from the iconic Roger Delgado who had featured so prominently a decade before. In many ways his performance as Tremas is my personal favourite on the programme. Tremas complements Tom's Doctor and is pivotal supporting the unravelling of the Master's plans. A bond is established with Sarah Sutton's Nyssa which aids her development and is explored further in 'Logopolis'. Ainley is subtle and a world away from his colourful portrayal of the Master. This difference is clearly intended, and Anthony Ainley was to return throughout the rest of the decade appearing semi-regularly with each of the Doctors.

In retrospect 'The Keeper of Traken' is held in some regard still to this day ex-

emplified by its 14th placing in the recent DWM 60th anniversary poll of Tom Baker's stories. Given the quality and standing of the Fourth Doctor's era overall this is certainly more than respectable. In Season eighteen only 'Logopolis' placed higher in this poll and maybe in part this is because of its iconic status as the last story of the Fourth Doctor's era on TV. This is a very different performance by Tom and one characterised in the Season with perhaps a more serious Doctor than before. You get a sense Tom the actor as well as the Doctor knows the end is coming and that somehow seeps into his performance. As a result, It's maybe fair to say this doesn't have the energy of his earlier adventures many would consider classic to his era. That said that fits with the tone and a sense of foreboding of death and new beginnings foreshadows what is to come. The end is coming but 'it has been prepared for'...



LOGOPOLIS

Review by Bedwyr Gullidge

'Logopolis', the grand finale to the epic era of the Fourth Doctor. Tom Baker's final regular outing; one last opportunity to wear the iconic long scarf and flash his teeth and curls; the last story of an unprecedented seventh season with the same actor in the lead role. Tom Baker's era solidified this actor, for so many regular and casual watchers of the programme, as THE Doctor. He symbolised Doctor Who more so than any actor before or since. So, his departure was a significant moment. But does 'Logopolis' provide a fitting swansong of the Fourth Doctor's rightly lauded tenure?

After all, this is an individual who survived two encounters with Davros, creator of the Daleks; He stared down the War Lord of the Zygons and became President of the Time Lords; defeated Magnus Greel, the Butcher of Brisbane; possessed the Key to Time; holidayed in Paris; and escaped E-space. This incarnation warranted a conclusion like none seen before. It is difficult to live up to that sort of hype but the intention to do so is certainly there. The stakes are raised; the peril is significant; it sets up for a finale of grandiose scale. 'Logopolis' is an intriguing but perhaps convoluted story, stacked full of intriguing theories and ideas. Consistent with the rest of Season 18, it features some complicated scientific and mathematical concepts including block transfer computation and the second law of thermodynamics. The rapid developments in the field of computer technol-

ogy, which were occurring during the early 1980's, also provided some of the terminology used - such as monitor and registers. Indeed, the Logopolitans can largely be understood as computer programmers and mathematicians.

Recursion is another concept, in the context of the TARDIS, which had been presented originally in the previous story 'The Keeper of Traken' and which would be expanded upon in the next, 'Castrovalva.' These are all very complex themes for viewers to be presented with, but is a detailed understanding of them necessary to enjoy the story? Of course not, but one idea in particular is central to the overall plot, so it is necessary to have a basic grasp of it, if one is to understand the danger in which our heroes find themselves.

Crucial to the narrative is the concept of 'universal entropy'. Entropy in isolation is generally associated with disorder, randomness and uncertainty but can also be comparable to a measurement of unavailable energy. In his 2010 book *Entropy theory of aging systems* humans, corporations and the universe, Daniel Hershey explained that as human beings we are born with low entropy and gradually move closer to maximum entropy - death, the ultimate disorder. Unfortunately, we do not have the benefit of bodily regeneration to overcome maximum entropy!

Following the theory of the Big Bang, first put forward during the twentieth

century, it is worth considering if our ever-expanding universe could itself reach a point where it cannot expand any further. If that occurs, then will our universe also suffer from maximum entropy where we will see increasing levels of disorder and perhaps even its ultimate demise? We see a glimpse of this in 'Logopolis'. Perhaps the universe itself will evolve, changing its very nature, including all the laws of physics? It is certainly one of an intriguing number of concepts put forward during this story and is perhaps the most direct parallel to the impending demise of this Doctor who is also about to reach maximum entropy.

Writer Christopher H. Bidmead introduces viewers to another new concept, but this time one which is related to the ongoing continuity of the programme, namely The Watcher - the Doctor's next incarnation, lurking in the wings,

observing events; a ghost from the future. This phantom provides a sense of foreboding throughout, reinforced predominantly by The Doctor's reaction to seeing the eerie figure. Unlike the deathly form which haunted children in disturbing safety adverts during the 1970's, this individual is shrouded in white. Yet as with most shadowy figures in the background of fictional narratives, the Watcher is met with mistrust and apprehension. It is only in the closing moments of Part Four that Nyssa declares, for the audience's benefit that, "He was the Doctor all the time!"

In previous Doctor Who stories up until this point, the scale of the dilemma or impending catastrophe faced by our heroes was largely isolated to a particular planet. Of course, the possibility of Daleks or the Eight Legs, for instance, threatening the wider universe was pre-



sent but was more an abstract concept built upon theoretical potential. Now we are used to the whole Universe being in jeopardy, as with the Flux in the era of the Thirteenth Doctor or with Davros' Reality Bomb in 'Journey's End'. In 'Logopolis' the threat is explicitly to the entire Universe for the first time – a fact that is highlighted when the Master chooses to address the “peoples of the universe” to make his ransom demands. Nyssa and Adric observing the entropy field which is beginning to engulf the entire Universe makes for a striking visualisation of the dramatic plot. It is particularly poignant for the Traken Union to have disappeared from the universe having been so vividly presented in the preceding story. Therefore, the threat is significant, and those stakes are raised far beyond those seen previously in the programme. Only this degree of jeopardy could meet the expectations of something which warrants the demise of our beloved Fourth Doctor.

Another perhaps more familiar concept presented in the final scenes of 'Logopolis' is the phenomenon of an individual's life flashing before their eyes prior to death. Of course, regeneration is not a definitive death but as we have seen since, notably in *The End of Time*, for the Time Lord concerned it feels like a death. So, we are treated to brief snippets of first villains and then friends. There are other nods throughout the story, such as the name dropping of “Totter's Yard” seen in the very first episode back in 1963. All these elements highlight that although the show changes, it moves forward whilst still being connected to the past.

Bringing back the Machiavellian Master

as the unscrupulous individual who would take advantage of the universal entropy, made for an appropriate confrontation between the two arch-rivals. Brief though it is, the tussle between the Time Lords atop the radio telescope mirrors the climactic encounter between Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls in Arthur Conan Doyle's short story *The Final Problem*. Whilst the struggle was not of the same dramatic conclusion as Holmes and Moriarty, there is a clear victor. Unfortunately, it is not the Doctor!

Despite all the nobility of self-sacrifice to save the universe, on a very basic level the Doctor falling from a radio telescope is a tad anticlimactic. Now of course we have since seen the Tenth Doctor plummet to Earth from a *Vin-vocci* spaceship, crash through a glass ceiling and hit the hard marble floor below. Similarly, the Thirteenth Doctor was very much 'The Woman Who Fell to Earth' and from a greater height than a radio telescope. The Fourth Doctor didn't fall quite as far, or as fast, and landed on grass. Yet it is the Fourth Doctor who regenerated, whilst the Tenth Doctor got to his feet with a few cuts and scrapes, (admittedly making for a great alternate action figure) and was capable to save the day once again. The same applies to the Thirteenth Doctor. The Fourth Doctor was sadly less fortunate.

There is however something very ethereal about the Fourth Doctor's closing moments, supported by the wonderfully evocative musical score provided by Paddy Kingsland of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. It is very much a moment that showcases the dramatic change, not just in terms of the lead

character but all of those around him. Season 18 had begun with the Doctor, Romana and K9. Now however the Doctor is surrounded by unfamiliar faces as he approaches the end.

We were recently treated to Tenth and Fourteenth Doctors David Tennant watching the studio footage of the regeneration sequence as part of the 60th Anniversary documentary Talking Doctor Who. It's fascinating to watch and reveals that filming that regeneration sequence caused a studio overrun. I'm sure this ratcheted up the tension in that studio even further! It gives an intriguing behind the scenes insight into how the regeneration was achieved by keeping the camera locked into position, filming at first Tom Baker, then the Watcher, then a heavily made-up Peter Davison, and finally a fresh-faced Davison. Tennant's reaction and memories of watching these memorable moments

on broadcast further demonstrates what a momentous event this regeneration remains to this day.

In conclusion, although the event which causes the regeneration is relatively simplistic, the scale of the peril is of a scale sufficient to make the Fourth Doctor's act of altruism a truly noble one. This particular regeneration ripples throughout the history of Doctor Who's 60 years as one of the programme's most iconic moments.

Everything that is familiar to us from Season 18 is about change, from the title sequence to the theme music, from costume design to the companions. However, nothing signifies a more momentous shift than the change in the lead actor. 'Logopolis' provides a sublime conclusion to the era of the Fourth Doctor and to Tom Baker in the lead.



AFTERWORD

By Matthew Waterhouse

Doctor Who made a huge impact on my first two decades, culminating in my being cast in it. In a rather abstract way, I'm still very fond of it, which is just as well because for me, as for all of we Old Who actors, it remains a big part of my working life. I don't watch it nowadays (except for work reasons), so my relationship with those old serials - which we now apparently have to call 'Classic' - is primarily one of memory. I did see a batch of stories on VHS in the 1990s. My own episodes, which were "comped" me and which for the most part I was returning to for the first time since they were broadcast, greatly impressed me. That's especially true of Tom's last year. An arthouse version of Doctor Who, which is what it amounts to, is a brave idea and it worked. The stylistic range is wide, from Terrance's Dicks's gothic vampire serial to Steve Gallagher's remix of Jean Cocteau to the extraordinary final serial, the tolling of the cloister bell. It all has a strange, unexpected beauty. A common complaint of Doctor Who actors is that all the episodes blur together. I don't see how that can be so with these stories. 'Warriors' Gate' and 'The Keeper of Traken' aren't easily confused.

Hopefully these serials helped unlock the imaginations of young viewers, leading them in time, (who knows?), to all sorts of rich things, to the chemistry lab, (to find out what is DNA), to Irish myth, to Cocteau himself perhaps. Going through papers some years ago I found a copy of the writer's guide for

this season, written by Christopher Bidmead with passages by Douglas Adams, and when I was invited to write Doctor Who fiction recently this became my 'bible'.

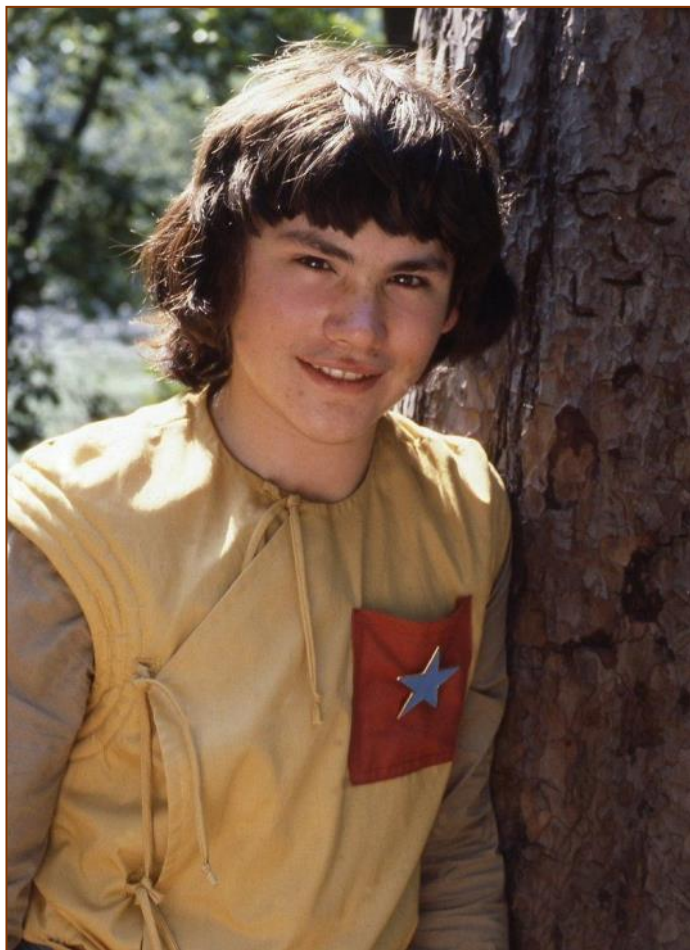
Having gone through my own episodes on VHS, I dipped into a generous sampling of the other serials - perhaps forty in all, from 'An Unearthly Child' to 'Survival', gaining a strong impression of the rhythms and shifts of those twenty-six years. (The only runs I've seen in their entirety are Jon's and Tom's.) It was entertaining and interesting, both as a casual viewer and as an actor associated with the series. As a rendering of a fiction genre which was extremely hard to do on TV, and for which TV people in general had little sympathy, the standard struck me as on the whole quite high. I wanted an accurate overview, and I made a point of not leaping on obvious highlights, so I watched, for example, 'The Power of Kroll' but not 'The Talons of Weng Chiang'. I don't remember seeing any episodes where I wondered how on Earth they'd got to a studio floor. The troughs didn't seem egregious.

I suppose that for more than one generation Tom's seven years will remain the ultimate Doctor Who 'Classics'. Some of this has to do with nostalgia, or that hallucinatory variant, the sensation whereby Stranger Things made people born in the 90s 'nostalgic' for the 80s. There's no question that Robert Holmes had a talent perfectly keyed to Doctor

Who: the science fiction story twisted into a gothic atmosphere that is the defining texture. And Tom's Doctor in 1974 was incredibly exciting, exuding potent mystery and strangeness. Tom came completely out of the blue. No-one had ever seen his movies. No-one knew his name. Just, there he was. He could be magical. The eccentric warmth and friendliness combined with something forbidding, a distance, an 'unknowableness', even a detachment, is a circle that I imagine all players of the character try to square. I've sometimes met people who said that, as a child, they found the second Doctor truly frightening. I think this is great. The Doctor should be frightening. And when I caught a couple of episodes of the revival, I was struck by how Christopher Eccleston created a Doctor unlike any from the original series but got all the notes right, the sweetness, the distance.

The old shows were of course disposable and have to be understood in the context of their time. Maybe some of Tom's gimmicks have worn out. Offering a child a jelly baby nowadays would be on a par with offering them a cigarette. Tom insisted that he didn't care what anyone over the age of ten had to say about Doctor Who but plenty of six-year-olds thought giving K9 the kiss of life was naff.

In the memory the Doctors are distinct but in terms of scripts they are interchangeable, and should be, as they are always the same character. I was interested to discover that, even after 75 Maigret novels and 28 Maigret short stories, for his creator Georges Simeon, Maigret never had a face. He represented a physical presence, the blank government functionary. It struck me in writing my Doctor Who novels that the Doctor is like this: having seven faces is like having no face at all because he must always be the same character. The little surface eccentricities – the recorder, the yoyo, the cricket – have nothing



to do with character, they're add-ons.

Alongside the Doctor there were companions who, on the other hand, had to be understood as individuals with their own qualities and their own talents, but, because of their place in the tapestry of a Doctor Who serial, they tended quickly to become generic, frequently appearing in nearly identical scenes, speaking nearly identical lines. I say this as a statement of fact rather than as a complaint. As far as it was a problem which anyone was interested in solving, it was never really solved and was probably, within the old format, the investigator and his Watson(s), insoluble.

At this point I'll make some remarks about the boy Adric. It's been drawn to my attention over the last few years that he is now interpreted as a neurodiverse character. I'm very pleased by this. It is a sensitive and intelligent reading and I believe it is correct. Of course, this term, and even, as far as I know, these ideas, did not exist then but the condition, unnamed, certainly did. On the occasions I spoke to one rag or another at the time, I said that I'd encountered certain kinds of gifted children in my life who had similar qualities and I was trying to capture something of them. This was true. I think, however unintended by the writers, the scripts do contain suggestions of the boy's autism and I did, obscurely, catch hold of it. (The British/Swiss mathematician Paul Dirac, after whom Christopher Bidmead named Adric, was probably autistic.)

Adric is of course bored out of his mind by the occupants of the Starliner, but he was naive to try joining the rebel

band of 'outliers.' I cannot see him sitting round a fire in a dirty cave planning revolution. He doesn't belong there either. He lives too much in his own head amongst his numbers. He is much more of an outsider than simply an outlier. When he meets the Doctor he discovers his lodestar. It is a kind of love story.

His neurodiversity is one thing. I'm also interested in his queerness - and this has been around as a reading for much longer. I am certain it is a right sense of the character. I am a gay person but after Doctor Who I played some uncomplicatedly straight young men. Adric never quite felt like that. Though I use the term gay for myself, I prefer queer for him because it is more ambiguous. It has crossed my mind that because 'Classic' Who companions in general have no apparent interest in romance (beyond the last episode 'deus ex machina' where a girl falls in love with an extra, or Brian Blessed,) you can have a queer character in which his queerness is marginal and goes unremarked.

Like all fictional characters his life comes from the space between him and others.

The relationship with Romana scarcely exists, and this is unfortunate. Beyond the Doctor the key character for Adric is Nyssa. This is more apparent in the next season (and more in the audios and most of all in my own fiction), but its contours are discernable in 'Traken' and 'Logopolis' for those who wish to see them. This friendship can be seen from a number of angles. The extremely smart, practical older sister, good with people, the brilliant distracted younger

brother who needs looking after. The nature of the boy's temperament means he probably gets more from her than she from him, but this is common with male/female relationships, whether sexual or not, because women are tougher than men. I do not think he is emotionally needy, but I do think, being impractical, he is somewhat dependent. Another way to see it is the duo of the gay boy and best girl pal. (Russell T Davies among others has made this a new pop culture trope). A third way is through their shared sense of loss. In most respects very young, in some ways their losses have made them older

than they should be. I think these are legitimate readings which really can be pulled out of the serials without too much labour.

After Tom left there was still plenty of juice in Doctor Who and some of the finest episodes were still to come but because he was so successful in the series and for a couple of now aging generations so much a part of that legendary early Saturday BBC TV line-up of the 1970s it's impossible not to see his going as a milestone. He was lucky to be bookended by two brilliant script-editors so he arrived and left with out-

standing seasons. I was surprised to find out from JNT that the next series would be shown on weekday evenings, removing Doctor Who from the slot it seemed to own. But this turned out to be an astute decision and gave the whole thing a new lease of life. It was something new now, and yet still a very pure redering of the spirit of Doctor Who.

Will I ever put Classic Who in the Blu-ray player? I am again 'comped' those seasons to which I have contributed, if only to an 'extra'. They are still wrapped. I don't know.



MW



THANK YOU

Thank you to the following people who helped to make this annual possible:

Nick Smith
Chris McAuley
Nick Joy
Alan Stevens
Ian Wheeler
Paul Simpson
Ed Brady
Joseph Chambers
Ian Bresman
Steve Maggs
Paul Burns
Andrew Smith
Tony Jordan
Christine Grit
Jackie Green
David Griffiths
Fiona Moore
Oliver Dallas
James Ashworth
Paul Driscoll
Joseph Chambers
Don Klees
Michael Crouch
Tim Robins
Simon Painter
Steve Hatcher
Tim Gambrell
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Paul Burns
Jeremy Bentham
Philip Gilfus
Mark Donaldson
Russell Sandberg
Andrew Smith
Owen Taylor
Matt Hills

William Joyce
Bedwyr Gullidge
Matthew Waterhouse
Chrisi Pashley
Ann Worrall
Ben John
Andy Hopkinson
Daniel O'Keefe
Barry Ward
Graeme Wey
David Lavelle
Alister Pearson

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