

COSMIC



MASQUE





EDITORIAL by Rik Moran

Blimey, here we are once again for another issue of Cosmic Masque. This is my 4th issue as Editor. How did that happen? Out of those that I've done so far, I can't say I have a favourite. I always feel that I can do better. Which brings me to this issue, which I think might be my best one yet.

Ian Fraser has delivered our cover for this issue, I know Talons seems to carry a bit of controversy with it these days, however it's still a favourite of mine, I adore Robert Holmes writing. If you've not seen it and you want to check it out I will point you to the Britbox feature in this issue. I for one love the idea of having Doctor Who available to watch wherever I am.

I have to give a huge thank you to all the contributors, with out who, you'd just have me rambling to fill the pages and no one wants that!

With the corona virus pandemic that's been affecting the world, hopefully this issue will help bring some welcome distraction from what's going on everywhere.

I hope some of the creativity we have displayed in this issue will encourage you to get involved or if you feel there is a project or subject in fandom which we should be covering then please do get in touch. Feedback is always welcomed in any way, shape or form. This publication is about you, the fans and for you, the fans, help us make it yours.

Finally, Cosmic Masque is free. It's our gift to our fandom about our fandom, please spread the word and share...

Rik ▲

Cosmic Masque X

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BIG FINISH FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES SERIES 9

Review by Tony Jones

Released January and February 2020, the ninth set of full-cast Big Finish adventures for Tom Baker are all about the fours. Fourth Doctor, four in the TARDIS (the Doctor, Romana, Adric and K9) and four great stories, each in four classic length episodes. All very different, each of the four writers has excelled in creating intriguing new worlds and huge cliff-hangers. Welcome back to E-Space! Welcome to the ongoing search for an elusive Charge Vacuum Emboitment (the CVE)!



Asteroid Adventure

Marc Platt is first up with *Purgatory 12*, a penal colony on a most curious asteroid, which has air and gravity despite its size. This is the smallest of the mysteries but (as is often the case) Marc Platt's writing is a masterclass in creating an intriguing new world inhabited by a fully rounded set of characters. Not only is it well described, but the whole cast / direction / sound work is spot-on. Fans will quickly spot a classic scenario of mad leader, monster hidden in the depths and a chance for revolution. While all these do play out, each takes an unexpected route.

Away from the action, this is also about Adric leaving the TARDIS, making his own way (with fantastic naivety) amongst the colony of criminals, and adolescent stubbornness (both Adric and, at times, the Doctor). Matthew Waterhouse is very clearly much older than when he first played Adric, and while it shows in his voice, he does capture a sense of Adric all through the set.

Each of the TARDIS team has something relevant to accomplish, with Romana being wrong-footed by a local would-be champion. Of course it all ends with the team travelling together again perhaps with more understanding of each other.

Train Travel

Jonathan Morris ups the stakes in the strange world competition with his story *Chase the Night*. Imagine a slow-revolving world, too near its sun. The nightside home to a tropical rainforest lit by luminescence, and the dayside a blistering desolate landscape of ash, unfit for life. On this world a crashed spacecraft keeps its crew alive by travelling on a circular track one step ahead of the ever-approaching daybreak. It's a terrific setting with interesting characters and a good mix of threats.

The ship has the inevitable over-zealous captain Pilot Dena, there's a threat from a new disease and a draconian approach to justice. Add the Doctor and team, the failing engines on the train-ship, betrayal and insurrection and you get all the ingredients for a terrific tale. There's even a nod to silent movies when one of the characters is tied to the track as the vast train ship approaches! Jane Asher is the pick of the guest cast as Pilot Dena trying to cope as her entire world seems to be falling apart around her.

It's epic and entertaining. It also shows some of the perspective of time lords versus more mortal beings. When faced with virtually certain death, the Doctor is no less focussed on his friends than the captain is on her own survival. There are difficult moments and a clever resolution.



Ware the Witchfinder

Another scan of e-Space leads to a spacecraft with an unusual cargo – witches! Alan Barnes's tale weaves a wicked web of excitement from witchfinders, witches and advanced AI trying to fulfil a mission. The cast of characters is exciting with Adric given another chance to deal with the devil and the Doctor forced to play the self-sacrificing hero.

There are twists, tricks and high stakes moments as we learn just what makes a witch and why witches are needed. There's even reflection on the impact of a specific sort of natural selection and the lowering of capability of the local population.

It's another inspired created world, this time a marsh with flexible landscape – not the best terrain for K9. Alan Barnes has crafted a wonderful setting and it would have been great to get more than one story set there.

Steampunk Space Opera

Andrew Smith takes up the pen bringing us the fabulous *Quest of the Engineer*. Andrew, of course, first brought Adric and stranded the Doctor, Romana and K9 in e-space in the 1980 TV story *Full Circle*.

This time Andrew brings us a story of a dirigible planet come machine come spaceship in a story reminiscent of his namesake EE Doc Smith and the golden age of space opera. This planet is the creation of a self-styled Engineer and if size isn't impressive enough, the planet is in fact a large machine constructed of interlocking pieces able to move back into the interior and be replaced by new sections.

The scale is epic but the story has a power intimacy. The TARDIS team are investigating the planet in the company of Regis Tel a heretical astronomer they've collected en route. While the confrontations between the Doctor, Romana and the Engineer are all very well realised the story has a large range of well-drawn secondary characters. Apart from Regis Tel there is also Jonas (a mysterious assistant / servant of the Engineer) and Anla Jessik (free prisoner come rebel). The story has all this and robots and a story about love and loss.

In some ways the secondary storyline is more gripping than the foreground mad scientist vs time lord trope. It really is a masterful piece of writing / casting / direction (Nick Briggs).

Overall

If there's one complaint with this set, it's the choice to have Lalla Ward portray Romana in strident form, particularly the first three stories. It's a small grumble compared to the thrill and enjoyment of a chance to spend time with this group of characters.

The sound design and music by Jamie Robertson also helps create this set of memorable stories. ▲



by Anthony Townsend

Diva Loka launched into the world in 2018, developing from a long-running unnamed social group with the intent of providing the Brighton area with regular Doctor Who focussed socials, screenings, guest events and location visits. And with the ultimate goal of being positive, inclusive and most of all fun.

Intended as a group open to a diverse membership, being Brighton the majority of active members are white gay men, but everyone is welcome and our reason d'artre is to celebrate Doctor Who and it's fandom in its entirety. Well, bar the miseries.

We have a thriving Facebook group, and every month we have at least one event. During 2019 we escaped the city limits of Brighton and Hove twice on pilgrimages to Doctor Who filming locations, which is what I've been specifically asked to write about.

Our first foray into the outside world was on Bank Holiday Monday 27 May 2019, in conjunction with the fabulous Sisterhood of Karn, London's Gay Men's Who group curated by the inimitable Richard Unwin. Our destination: the river Thames through central London taking in as many Who locations as possible, including the place of the first ever location footage from the very first episode, *An Unearthly Child*. What, you say? Surely not! It's well known that the first location footage wasn't until much later in the first season! Well, more on that later...

Of course, the aim was to also visit as many hostelries as possible on the way.

Whilst I arranged the route and places of interest, Riccy dreamed up a selection of tasks and challenges for attending groups to complete. We also planned appropriate scene recreations along the way.

The event was free to attend, but with the sad passing mere days before of fandom and our good friend, the irrepressible Paul Condon, we decided to dedicate the walk to him and collect from attendees in honour of Alzheimer's Society, a charity close to his heart.



In the spirit of Paul I donned a 13th Doctor costume for the day and let 30 or so expectant faces from Westminster Bridge through to Wapping, taking in The Millennium Eye, Royal Festival Hall, St Paul's Cathedral, The Tower of London and Butler's Wharf amongst others.

It wasn't long before the throng of fans, having made it through the crowds who must have also been gathered to marvel at the scenes of the Dalek invasion and the space pig, needed sustenance, and Dick Fiddy of the BFI was kind enough to open the balcony bar there for us. The biggest challenge of the day was getting folks to leave it again.

Whilst the teams juggled enjoying the walk with Riccy's challenges, like getting a photo with someone who could be the Doctor and sketching the tour guide as a Who character, they also acted out relevant scenes from Who including *Frontier in Space*, *Dark Water*, *Resurrection of the Daleks* and *Talons of*

Weng Chiang at the relevant locations. Prizes galore were available: action figures, books and Who-related nick-nacks were awarded to happy faces and eager hands.



Doing my best to provide details of where the TARDIS had variously landed along the way, Ogron attacks, Terileptil trauma, Nestene lairs, ghoul grimaces and the rest, we ended in Wapping for the pier where Patsy Smart uttered those immortal words 'It's a floater alright! Never seen anything like it in all my puff' a mere five hours later. Quite a trek, but a fun and rewarding one.



And of course, there was the matter of the earliest location footage. It is the shot taken atop St Paul's Cathedral of the surrounding streets, used as the TARDIS scanner shows London zooming away, as revealed by one of our attendees. It was also here that a majority of the group indicated how easily they could be cyber converted, as they passed like sheep through the two sculptured arches on the pathway to the Millennium bridge without question. Sheesh!



Credit: Paul Phipps-Williams Photography

The next visit was far less complicated - half a dozen Whomosexuals taking the bus out to Telscombe Cliffs, scene of the location filming of Thoros Beta for The Trial of a Time Lord - Mindwarp.



Being the end of September, this was a wet and windy day, but the very start heralded good things to come as the bus that arrived to take us was none other than the John Nathan-Turner, entirely by chance! Buses in Brighton and Hove are all named after sadly deceased illustrious citizens of the area, with the JNT serving the route to Eastbourne past his old home opposite the location we were heading for. Naturally we stopped there and outside director Fiona Cumming's old flat to pay homage.

Full of cheer, we dismantled the JNT and headed to the White Cliffs Cafe, the scene of JNT's interview that appeared in pieces

across a number of BBC DVD releases. Eating lunch while the weather waned, we then walked, aided by the supporting wind, along the cliffs to the best access point to get to the beach as the tide made its way outward.

It's a bit of a clamber, especially back along the beach as you have to navigate over iron ladders and walls to reach the right stretch. A bunch of middle aged homosexuals would have made a hilarious sight as we huffed and puffed to get there, handy anyone else been foolhardy enough to be there, but it was all worthwhile as we got to the rocks and 'cave entrance' where the Doctor and Peri landed in the TARDIS, headed to enter the tunnels and where the aforementioned Miss Brown found herself chained.

The sky may not have been green nor the sea pink, but it was still a thrill to walk on these familiar surroundings; the white rocks beneath our feet, the sea lapping at the shore and the white cliffs above us.

A word of warning, if you do this trek be sure the tide is going out, wear very sensible clothing and footwear and don't go unaccompanied, even in summer. It is slippery and there is ladder climbing to do as well as traversing the 'acid bath', an open tank of water left at a disused water treatment works on the shore.

The wind kept up but the rain had ceased for the climb down and up at least. It was a short and simple nearby trip but a whole lot of fun, which is what Diva Loka is all about.

Next trip: Arundel for 'Windsor Castle' and various other Silver Nemesis sights in the Spring, perhaps? Why not find out and keep up with us on Facebook or Twitter (@DivaLoka3 - I mucked up the previous three attempts to open an account). ▲

All article photos credited to Anthony Townsend, except where otherwise indicated





REVIEW: THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES VOLUME 03 (LIMITED EDITION)

By Matt Dennis

WARNING: This article contains Spoilers

Despite this being the third such boxset, one still has to regularly pinch themselves when remembering that there are ACTUAL Big Finish Tenth Doctor audios ACTUALLY starring David Tennant. Ever since the first trilogy of Tenth Doctor Adventures hit shelves in 2016, the almost-annual trilogy of stories featuring the Tenth Doctor have become one of the biggest highlights of Big Finish's release schedule. Reuniting Tennant with Catherine Tate as Donna is a no-brainer, considering their continued popularity and the dynamite chemistry between them, and each story in this boxset makes the most of them.

The set opens with James Goss' *No Place*, a scary instalment that plays out in a way which immediately draws comparison with Tom MacRae's unmade Series 4 *Century House* storyline. Told in the style of a home makeover TV show crossed with *Most Haunted*, *No Place* reunites Tennant and Tate with beloved co-stars Bernard Cribbins and Jaqueline King, a reunion that proves to be the major selling point of the boxset. Hearing these four together is a delight, the Doctor and Wilf especially getting a decent number of neat little scenes together.

The play itself uses the audio format well despite the limitations the concept puts upon it. An audio adventure told in the style of a TV Show, the music and sound design is used effectively throughout to convince the audience of this, using television-style edits, sounds and cuts to sell the format. It's also an excellent example of audio horror – a properly chilling storyline that is perfect for night time listening.

Goss' script is interesting in the way it reverse-engineers the basic *Doctor Who* format. Here the Doctor and the Noble-Motts are cast as the antagonists, entering the story with a rough idea as to what's going on. The story instead presents us an audience surrogate in TV presenter Justin (Joel Fry), who finds himself at the centre of the hauntings that transpire throughout the story.

As with his previous Tenth Doctor story *Death and the Queen*, Goss nails the Doctor/Donna relationship with ease, here basing much of the humour around their pretence as a married couple. Tennant and Tate are hilarious throughout, whilst Cribbins and King are a joy to hear on audio once again.



If there's one disappointment that arises with *No Place*, it's that the climax is rushed and the explanations lack detail – but this never detracts from what is an effective and spooky story.

One Mile Down goes in a more traditional direction, writer Jenny T. Colgan delivering a blistering sci-fi take on tourism, gentrification



and the damaging effects of colonialism. Set in the underwater city of Vallarasee, the Doctor and Donna find the city now enclosed inside an airdome and the natives forced to adapt by wearing cumbersome water-breathing apparatus by a self-interested Intergalactic Trust, all to attract more tourists to the city. Of course, trouble isn't far away...

The plot is pretty thin, with the central mystery ultimately leading to a fairly guessable conclusion. But despite this, the story is tightly plotted and results in some great drama and tragic imagery. The satire is on-the-nose at times, but the characters are interesting enough that it matters not. The Judoon are a welcome addition too, even though their presence is surplus to requirements. In the tradition of all great returning-monster stories, Colgan has some fun with them and adds something new to the mix.

Tennant is on furious form here, his colder, angrier moments lending the story much in the way of dramatic weight. Likewise, the story throws plenty of drama and tension to the rest of the cast in its second half, going full-on into disaster movie territory akin to *Voyage of the Damned*. With this driving the drama, the resulting character interactions form the definitive highlight of the play, especially Donna's sparring with prejudiced tourist Garth (Robert Whitelock).

Concluding proceedings is *The Creeping Death* by Roy Gill, arguably the most traditional story in the set. Though it doesn't succeed in being as creepy as the title promises, the story is an interesting one, focusing on an oft-forgotten tragedy in our

recent history (the Great Smog of 1952) and using this as a springboard for the kind of science fiction horror that *Who* does so well.

Riffing on horror movies like *The Mist* (2007), the play neatly combines base-under-siege with a claustrophobic feel, as the Doctor, Donna and a group of survivors fend off terrifying monsters hiding in the toxic fog. The guest characters are drawn from stock horror movie archetypes, but Gill imbues each with enough interesting facets that the audience cares when deaths start to occur, adding to the tension greatly. The monsters are a nice touch too.

The Creeping Death creeps along and offers a few scares here and there, but it's the barnstorming finale that makes it. Completely bonkers yet undeniably clever, the climactic moments elevate the play considerably, whilst conjuring up the kind of visuals that a TV version would struggle to achieve convincingly. Some will see it as a sudden tonal jump, but Gill's script sets things up so well that it isn't an issue.

Like with the previous two boxsets, The Tenth Doctor Adventures Volume 3 caters to all needs in one form or another, the three stories offering plenty of variety in terms of story and style. There's enough horror, social commentary, humour, madcap adventure and human drama spread out across the three stories that each would feel right at home sandwiched between the later Series 4 episodes. And of course, David Tennant and Catherine Tate are tremendous throughout.

We have to pinch ourselves again – it just doesn't feel real! ▲



DOCTOR WHO ON BRITBOX

By Garry Aylott

BritBox has been live here in the UK for a few months now, and with the recent addition of most of Classic Doctor Who I have taken a look at the service on various apps. So, let's see how it fairs.

What is BritBox I hear you ask? Good question. BritBox is an online digital streaming service set up by the BBC and ITV plc to provide, as the name suggests, a library of British boxsets from classic shows through to fairly modern releases.

It has felt like a long time waiting for this streaming service to arrive in the UK. We are spoilt with some, like the recent Star Wars movies opening a day early, the BBC channel with no ads and most of the other streaming services being in the UK alongside their US counterparts. However, BritBox has been an exception. Available in other markets for some time it has only recently arrived in the UK. It launched on 7th November 2019 with a monthly subscription price of £5.99

(you can sign up with a 30-day free trial). But there was also one key show missing from the service at launch. Not Doctor Who I hear you cry? Yes, Doctor Who, although they swiftly rectified that on 26th December.

Ultimately, BritBox could just be called 'WhoBox' (or any other suitable and clever name you want to think up). The service has been marketed to Doctor Who fans more than any group. When you log in or open up an app (more on those later), the top-level navigation has Doctor Who available right there on the front page. You don't need to search. No other show on BritBox has that. Neat.

There was also plenty of marketing on BritBox itself for the forthcoming Doctor Who content after the initial launch. Many of the ads were not so much for the service itself, but rather for 'all the DW you can watch'. Even ITV showed a few ads pushing DW on

BritBox (for those of you not in the UK, the BBC and ITV are prime time TV rivals).

Diving into Doctor Who

So Boxing Day, when they added the Classic DW arrives. Our palms are warm with excitement, we open the app or log in to the site to check it all out. Did they deliver? A big yes is the answer, with a few extras thrown in for good measure.

Searching for Episodes

Go into any other show on BritBox and you will see a standard layout of a nice large background image, the title, a few calls-to-action like 'watch', add to 'My List' and then a list of series and episodes. With DW however, things are very different, for the better.

Clicking into DW from either the top navigation link or from a section that is on the homepage and you are presented with what is basically its own area within the app. Unlike other shows, you get the large DW logo at the top then lots of ways to get into each Doctor/era of the show along with curated content that highlights various Doctors and special features. It's important to note that (at the moment) there is no modern DW, it is all classic.

What is Included?

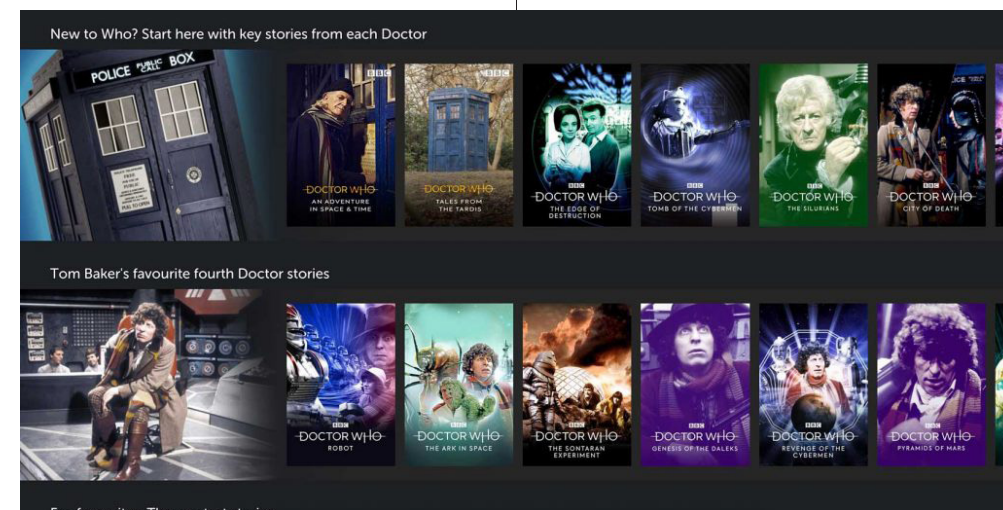
There are 627 items of content are available including 129 complete stories, comprised of 558 episodes

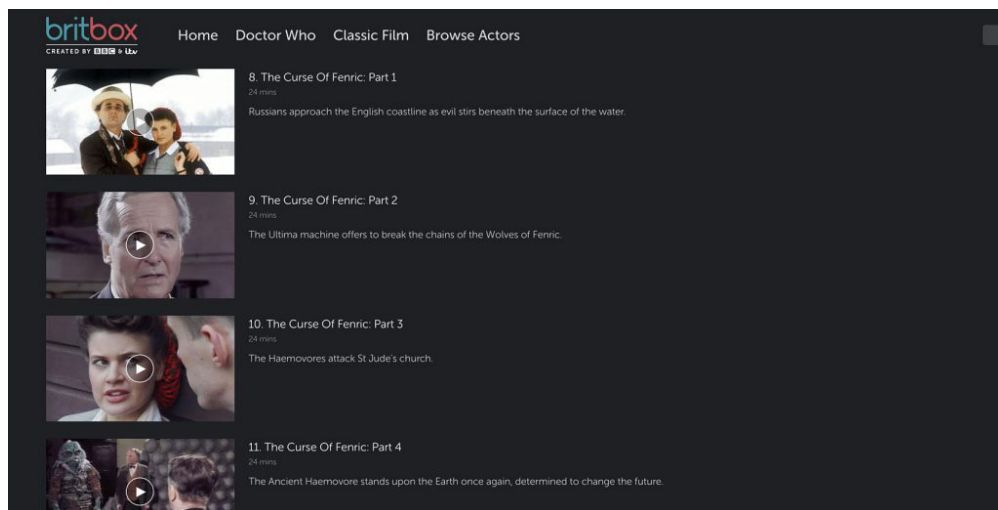
Four of the stories (22 episodes), namely 'The Tenth Planet', 'The Moonbase', 'The Ice Warriors' and 'The Invasion' are made up of a collection of originally aired content along with the animation. 'Shada' is presented as a 130 minute special. Two purely animated stories 'The Power of the Daleks' and 'The Macra Terror' are included in HD.

There are 5 orphan episodes available too, from 'The Crusade', 'Galaxy 4', 'The Space Pirates' and 'The Celestial Toymaker'. 'The Underwater Menace', 'The Wheel in Space' and 'The Web of Fear' are included and completed with telesnaps

The 8th Doctor TV Movie is there as are the rejected Pilot Episode, 'An Adventure in Space and Time', 'K-9 and Company', the documentaries 'More Than 30 Years in the TARDIS' and 'Doctor Who: Doctors Revisited'

That is pretty much all of classic Who. There are exceptions such as the surviving episodes from 'The Dalek Master Plan', 'The Evil of the Daleks' and 'The Abominable Snowmen'. Maybe we will see them arrive one day.





If you know which Doctor or story you want to watch it is easy to get to it. You can either click on the Doctor you want from the top section (it displays them using the nice illustrated style artwork that was done last year) and that will take you into that Doctor's area which displays each story as a collective.

There is a full-width section further down titled 'Over 600 Doctor Who Classic episodes' with a button 'browse by episode' which takes you into a more detailed view where you can browse through each series and select episodes directly.

One important thing to note and something I feel needs fixing is that you cannot search for episodes in the main search bar. You can search for 'Doctor Who' and it will return a few results like 'Doctor Who Classic' and the documentaries etc but that's it. Stranger still, if you search for say, Peter Davison, it will return results for all the shows he is in except DW! So, bear this in mind if you want to get to a specific story or episode.

One thing I would like to see improved is the consistency of the episode artwork as there is a mixture of images being used within each series. They have gone with a specific photo of each Doctor for a series, but then some episodes have used what looks to be the image from the DVD releases along with the same title text and logo.

Along with each Doctor having their own section when you click into them, BritBox has put together some cool collections if you are having a hard time deciding what story to watch. This is a great feature for me as I cannot tell you the number of times I have decided to watch classic Who, walked over to the bookcase and just stared at the DVDs for about 10 minutes before closing my eyes, waving my finger, and stopping on the story I am going to watch, before changing my mind and doing it over again.

You get 'New to Who' which is a popular story from each era along with 'An Adventure in Space and Time' and 'Tales from the TARDIS'. There are collections like 'Villains: Cybermen' or 'The Fourth Doctor: 10 of the Best.' Other good collections are the actor's favourite episodes such as 'Tom Baker's favourite fourth Doctor stories'. A lot more work has gone into the presentation of Doctor Who on BritBox than with any other series.

How Does the App Perform?

I have so far used BritBox in the browser (Google Chrome), on Apple TV and on my iPhone. Thankfully the development into the apps has been done rather well and performance is good across all three that I tested. My app of choice is Apple TV. It is awesome watching classic Who on a large TV (plus I use Apple TV for a few other mainstay

apps like Netflix, Twitch etc). It is snappy and the picture quality is top-notch, especially for things like AASAT and 'Spearhead from Space' which are presented in HD. Overall, the picture quality is good and on a par to that which you will have seen on the DVDs. The audio appears very good too, although I have yet to do a side-by-side comparison.

What is the Future of Doctor Who on BritBox?

This is an interesting question that I am sure many have asked. It seems unlikely that products where money has been spent on reconstruction (such as the recently released animated version of The Faceless Ones') will be immediately available. New Who is of course already available in its entirety on BBC iPlayer at no monthly charge at all. Perhaps we will get other related shows such as 'Torchwood' and 'The Sarah-Jane Adventures'?

There is a wider discussion to be had around physical and digital media. I (and many other Who fans) am a sucker for physical releases. I love all my boxsets and individual DVDs but equally there would be something cool

about firing up the app and having all of Who available within seconds. 'Hmm, I'm in the mood for Remembrance of the Daleks' and ooh, do you remember the 9th Doctor story Dalek? Let's watch that after'. Being able to weave your way through classic and modern Doctors and follow a particular monster or reference is a great concept.

I am loving BritBox right now. To be honest I did not think I was going to sign up, let alone get stuck into watching any classic DW again especially as I have them all on DVD anyway. But the easy access via the well made app led to me viewing one story and then another.

BritBox is a great home for classic Who. ▲

Garry is the founder, producer and co-host of The Big Blue Box Podcast and its website. When not in front of a microphone he's either designing and developing websites or tracking down Doctor Who merchandise.

You can visit The Big Blue Box website here: www.bigblueboxpodcast.co.uk

Twitter: twitter.com/bigblueboxpcast

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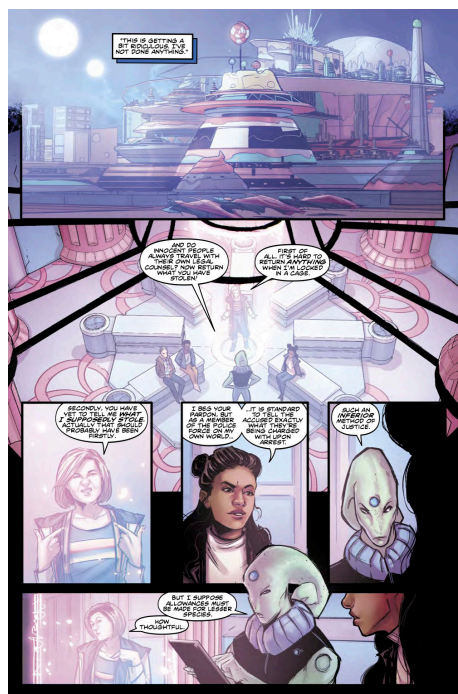
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REVIEW: DOCTOR WHO - 13TH DOCTOR VOLUME 3 OLD FRIENDS by Riley Chambers

the TARDIS and leave. There is not much backstory about why they were there in the first place and instead looks like a bit of filler to get the plot moving. Other frames are very empty and I think that they could have included more dialogue to help make the story flow better. On that note, what there is seems to be largely given over to bad jokes and 'whacky language' rather than proper story development.

And the story itself? It was OK. Casual and newer fans will enjoy it. I certainly didn't hate it. As for the story itself, it was just ok to me.



It is fair to say that the 13th Doctor's first two series have split fandom down the middle, some enjoying the new look to the series, whereas others apparently loath it. A common complaint though, seems to have been the size of the TARDIS crew. Three companions were the model back in 1963, but these days I frequently feel that nobody gets sufficient time for development. The Thirteenth Doctor volume 3 *Old Friends* from Titan Comics should help to address this to a degree with more time taken with the characters.

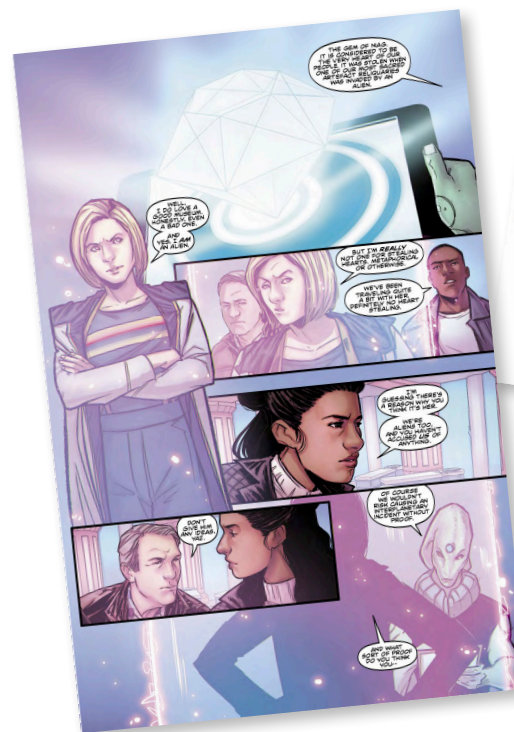
I was instantly drawn into this issue by the cover art - a very simple design of Jodie in front of the TARDIS with her sonic glowing. As I open it, I note that the inside artwork doesn't match the cover. I am a bit disappointed with that. The main characters have a weird shadowing on their noses that makes them look a bit bulbous. It reminds me of the old W.C. Fields movies, although I should add that the background artwork is excellent. Let's see how the story goes.

This is your standard inter-planetary caper. We start on the planet Devivian. The Doctor is accused of stealing a sacred artifact. Long story short, they run off, make it to

I did enjoy the part about 'The Corsair'. I've wondered about that character since "The Doctor's Wife". And the end of the magazine gives a brief history about him/her.

Any comic or graphic novel relies on individual interpretation. This is no different. If you are a comic book fan, more specifically a Doctor Who comic book fan, check it out for yourself. You may not agree with me at all!

Allons-Y!!!! ▲



**Doctor Who - Old Friends
is available from all good
booksellers**

ISBN: 1785866923





REVIEW: THE DOCTOR WHO ROLEPLAYING GAME by Rik Moran



The Doctor Who Roleplaying Game is set in the universe of the world's longest running science fiction show on TV – the BBC's Doctor Who. This latest edition of the rulebook, fully updated with imagery from the Twelfth Doctor's adventures, presents all the rules and background you need to have your own adventures in time and space in a single volume, including:

A complete set of rules for playing the game.

Rules for creating your own characters, gadgets and more.

A guide to creating your own adventures, as well as two new adventures.



Ready-made character sheets for the Twelfth Doctor and his companions, including Clara Oswald, Danny Pink, Madame Vastra, Jenny and Strax.

Rules and background for some of the Doctor's most infamous enemies – including Missy!

All-new imagery from the Twelfth Doctor's adventures.

The game system itself is old school and put me very much in mind of Dungeons and Dragons but slightly simpler. The mechanics are a basic attribute plus skill plus 2d6 to determine a result number. This may be an old style but I actually think it works – its familiar enough for gamers like me to recognise or even adapt and yet simple enough for those new to RPGs.

Character creation is point based. This is my preferred way of doing things as it means I get to craft the character into the shape I want. However, if you don't want to go to the effort of creating your own character then there are pre-created characters for you to use. Characters consist of attributes, traits, and skills and character creation is a relatively quick and painless process although the included skills list is rather limited (twelve in all) but the traits seem to help even the field. The attributes are Awareness, Coordination, Ingenuity, Presence, Resolve, and Strength rated on a scale of one to six. Traits are broken down into "good" (Boffin or Lucky as examples), "bad" (say Cowardly or Outcast), and



"special" (being an Alien or having Telepathy); taking a "bad" trait provides you with extra points for character creation. Skills are very broad such as Marksman or Craft and can be specialized but still only amount to a dozen choices.

Action resolution is straightforward as you will have a target number your character will look to better, and to do so you add together the appropriate attribute and skill, include any bonus or penalty from traits, and then add the result of a 2d6 roll. The aim here is to roll high and the higher the better because the amount above or below the

target number your combined score is determines how well you succeed or spectacularly you fail. Success and failure are divided into three levels of quality, and easy for the Game Master (basically the Dungeon Master from Dungeons and

Dragons) to process. Simply enough you're answering the question if the roll was a success and the answers can be Yes and..., Yes..., or Yes but... The exact opposite is true for failure so you simply replace Yes with No in the same way.

There are also Story Points which players earn and can cash in to bend the rules of the game from time to time. Effectively good roleplaying and being a good person earns you points to spend while being a bad guy will cost you Story Points. It's interesting the good guy approach will add to your Point total as this is well within the setting of the show; the Doctor travels with good people who are looking to make a difference.

The game is simple, which should help draw in newbies to the rpg world who happen to be Who fans. The mechanics are quick and should become second nature after a very short time. The whole feel of the game does indeed reflect the themes and energy of the show itself.

Cubicle 7 also have available a number of extra sourcebooks and adventures for the game, so you have some more materials to scarf up if you want to get more deeply into the Whoniverse. There's books on each Doctor's era (apart from 13 but I expect that will probably be the next edition) Each book has a detailed guide to every episode from that era, including information on the Doctor's allies, enemies, gadgets and aliens he encounters. There's a Game Master's Guide to help you with running a game. There's a book with extra scenarios to save you making up your own adventures, I like to make mine up but I know others find it easier to play something pre-written.

To wrap up, It is a perfectly respectable game, for what it is: a fairly accurate representation of the TV show.

7/10 ▲

<http://cubicle7.co.uk/our-games/doctor-who-aitas/>





FROM THE LAND OF FICTION

By Stephen Hatcher
(Fiction Editor)

Welcome to the fiction section of *Cosmic Masque* Issue 10. Once more we have a selection of some of the best unofficial fan writing for *Doctor Who* around. With the adventures of the Thirteenth Doctor (if we can still call her that) back on the telly, it's perhaps unsurprising that many of the stories that we have been sent feature our latest Doctor and her friends. Indeed all of this issue's stories follow this pattern. Our various writers are clearly keen to get their teeth into this latest incarnation and without exception, have captured the Doctor, Ryan, Yaz and Graham beautifully.

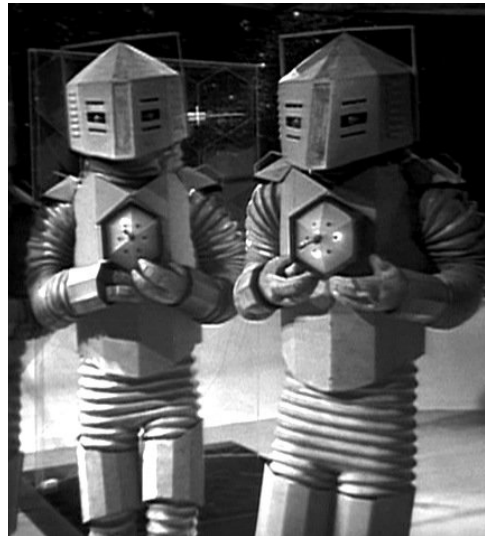
Trinah Eke wrote the delightful *Backfire* in CM8. She returns here with *Control*, a smashing story in which the Doctor, Yaz and Graham fight to save Ryan from an alien worm, who makes himself too much at home.

Cameron Holt and Nathan Mullins' four-part story, *Requiem Among the Stars*, reaches Episode Three, in which a naughty scientist has to put right a past mistake and the Doctor makes a decision which will have major repercussions. This story concludes next month, but fear not, Cameron and Nathan are bursting with fresh ideas and I am sure we will be hearing from them lots in years to come – unless they get tempted away from CM by a hugely lucrative publishing contract, of course.

Richard Wright is not the late *Pink Floyd* keyboard player, but is a new and exciting talented writer. In *Creation Myths* we meet the Doctor before she has yet become truly the Doctor and reencounter two old friends from classic *Doctor Who*, who really should have met before and who have a lot of magic in common. Before the story is ended,

another old acquaintance turns up too. It was a huge pleasure to receive and read this story – which really needed very little editing.

I reminded readers last issue, that *Cosmic Masque* is a magazine by and for its readers. We the editorial team can't write it all; we need you to tell your stories. Send us what you've got, to the email address at the front of this issue and your work will be considered for inclusion. It doesn't matter if you haven't written anything before; my job as fiction editor is to help you tell your stories. As I said last time, just imagine how you will feel, when you see your story, under your name, here in *Cosmic Masque*. Lots of you have done just that over the coming months but we always welcome new stories featuring the Doctor, his/her friends and enemies or are generally set in the Universe of Doctor Who. Anyone fancy being the first to write a story featuring the Jo Martin Doctor? Details are in the Matt Smith banner at the end of the section. ▲



CONTROL

By Trinah Eke

Ryan timed the move perfectly, releasing the football just as the bully reached the boy. The ball hit the bully's shoulder and bounded away behind him. The bully turned, looking for the source of the impact. He saw the football, looked around and spotted Ryan watching him. "Did you do that?" he shouted.

Ryan nodded. The bully forgot about the boy and walked menacingly toward Ryan. Ryan steeled himself, determined to stand his ground. The bully reached him and swung his arm in a punch, Ryan blocked the punch with ease. The bully swung again and again, each time Ryan blocked the punches with ease. It was so easy Ryan laughed. It was hard to believe he had ever had trouble co-ordinating his limbs.

Earlier in the Caves of Ithicya.

"Don't let it touch you!" yelled the Doctor as she dodged a blow from a large tentacle.

"We are trying to avoid it!" yelled Graham.

"It's really nimble for its size!" yelled Yaz, dodging out of the way of another tentacle.

"Aargh!" Yaz turned to see Ryan slump to the ground.

"Hold on!" yelled the Doctor. "Yaz lure it towards that tunnel opening." The Doctor pointed in the direction of a tunnel entrance further along the cave system. Yaz moved towards the opening leaping from side to side to avoid its tentacles as the creature advanced on her. She threw herself into the tunnel entrance to avoid a blow, but the creature followed and Yaz shot back out. She watched the Doctor level the sonic screwdriver at the tunnel entrance and

press a button. Yaz turned back towards the creature pursuing her, just in time to see the rock face collapse, burying it under a mountain of rock.

"Good work, Yaz." said the Doctor, surveying the rubble where the tunnel used to be.

"I thought you meant that one," said Yaz pointing further along the caves system.

"I did, but one tunnel is as good as another," the Doctor replied. "Ryan!" she exclaimed, suddenly remembering him. She ran to Ryan who was slumped unconscious on the ground and scanned him with the sonic screwdriver.

"Is he OK Doc?" asked Graham, clearly concerned.

The Doctor's expression told Yaz all she needed to know. "We need to get him back to the TARDIS."

"I told you he's heavier than he looks." said Graham out of breath. They set Ryan down on the TARDIS floor. "You really should consider a sofa for the console room."

"Yaz, quickly, I need a medical scanner, there's one in the floor locker."

"On it." Yaz ran to get the scanner.

"Is he going to be OK, Doc?"

"I don't know... yet." the Doctor replied. Yaz returned and handed the scanner to the Doctor. "OK, let's see what's going on."

The Doctor moved the scanner over Ryan pausing over his right shoulder. She studied the screen on the instrument. "What is it Doc? What's wrong with him?" asked Graham.

"He's fine." replied the Doctor.

Graham gave an audible sigh of relief.

"He's unconscious." said Yaz still concerned.

"Just sleeping." said the Doctor.

"So we just fought and killed the Sandman?" asked Graham sarcastically.

It was then that Ryan sat bolt upright, catching everyone off guard.

"Morning sleepy head." said Graham.

Ryan didn't respond, pulling himself awkwardly to his feet.

"You alright mate?" Ryan again, made no response, "Doc? What's wrong with him?"

The Doctor watched Ryan intently. Yaz moved towards him, the Doctor pulled her back. "What... what's wrong?" Yaz asked.

"Move away from him Graham." the Doctor instructed.

"What is going on Doctor?" Graham asked insistently.

Ryan tried to take a step forward but almost fell over his own feet.

"Having trouble with the steering? Not as easy as it looks is it?" the Doctor asked.

"That's not Ryan is it?" Graham asked in almost a whisper.

"He's still in there...just sleeping." replied the Doctor.

"You said he was fine." said Yaz.

"I was talking future tense, he will be fine... I promise." said the Doctor.

"Future tense." repeated Graham shaking his head.

Ryan attempted to take a step again, this time he did fall over.

"So that creature... it... I don't know what it did, but it did something." said Yaz.

"It transmitted a parasite; it's called a Fflib... I know, stupid name. The creature was old, the Fflib needed a new host. It's an interesting species... incredible survival mechanism, completely takes over the host." The Doctor was clearly becoming excited.

"I'm glad you find this entertaining, but how do we get it out of him?" asked Graham.

"I'm working on it." replied the Doctor.

Ryan watched the girl approaching, keeping her head down as if avoiding eye contact with anyone. A group of five boys stood ahead of her, one of the boys nudged a neighbour and nodded towards the girl. Each boy in turn became aware of the approaching girl; they fanned out across the corridor blocking her path. Ryan pulled a sheet of A4 paper from his pad, quickly rolled it into a ball and propelled it toward one of the boys, hitting him between the shoulders. The boy turned, spotted the paper ball and looked around for the source. Ryan had already rolled a second ball when the first boy noticed him, he threw it and it hit another boy on the back of the head. Ryan smiled. "Oi!" yelled the first boy as the second turned to see what hit him. In unison, the boys turned.

Ryan rolled another ball, "Who's next?" he asked. The boys advanced on him, he saw the girl slip past behind them. Mission accomplished.

Ryan was attempting to get to his feet again. The Doctor ran to the floor locker, rummaged around inside and pulled out what looked to Yaz to be a generic game console controller with a screen and small antenna dishes attached. Using the thumb sticks to adjust the settings, the Doctor walked slowly towards Ryan. The antenna dishes moved into position with a whir. "Got you!" yelled the Doctor triumphantly. Ryan slumped to the floor.

"What did you do?" asked Graham.

"Incapacitated it... him... them. It doesn't last long so we'd better tie them up... without making any physical contact."

"How are we supposed to do that?" asked Yaz.

"Very, very carefully." replied the Doctor.

A short time later they had managed to tie Ryan to a pillar in the console room. Graham removed his makeshift gauntlets and let out a long breath. "What's the plan, Doc?" he asked.

"I'm going to persuade the parasite to leave."

"You couldn't have done that before we tied it up?"

"No Graham, I couldn't." replied the Doctor haughtily.

"What do you need us to do?" asked Yaz.

"I am going to have a chat with the Fflib, what I need you to do is... moral support." said the Doctor looking from Yaz to Graham. Yaz nodded. The Doctor walked to the floor locker, rummaged around and produced a stethoscope. "This could take a while, please don't interfere." she said walking over to Ryan. She placed the stethoscope earpieces in her ears, and held the business end against Ryan's head, closing her eyes. "Now, communicating with the Fflib isn't easy, so I need you to stay nice and quiet while I send it a little telepathic message." Yaz flashed an encouraging look to Graham and then silently, the pair watched as the Doctor screwed her eyes up in concentration.

She should start with something easy; something nice and friendly. She reached for the alien mind and sent out the message. "Hello, I'm the Doctor."

The Doctor was aware that the Fflib was trying to answer, but at first all she could make out was a burst of what sounded in her mind like repeated clicks. Little by little, it

resolved into words. The meaning was clear. "What you want with Fflib?"

She sent out a reply. "I need my friend back, but I could take you here instead." The Doctor projected an image of a planet inhabited by multiple herbivorous species.

"No." replied the Fflib.

"OK, don't like that one, how about this one?" the Doctor asked sending more images of a different planet.

"No." the Fflib replied.

"OK...what do you want?"

"Stay." replied the Fflib.

"I can't let you stay. There are so many worlds, I can find one for you."

"No. Stay." the Fflib replied. "Travel." it added.

"I can't allow that." replied the Doctor sadly. She broke contact.

Graham watched the Doctor open her eyes and sigh.

"What happened?" asked Graham.

"It doesn't want to leave." replied the Doctor sadly. "OK, I need some things... Graham will you help me?"

"Er... sure." he replied and flashed a glance to Yaz, who gave him an encouraging smile.

"It's alright, I'll stay with him, you go."

Graham followed the Doctor out of the console room and along a series of corridors. "So, what's next then Doc?" he asked.

"I am going to have to incapacitate them again and then get the Fflib out, which will probably kill it though," she said sadly.

"But Ryan will be OK though, right?" asked Graham.

"Yes, Ryan will be fine." she replied with an edge of uncertainty in her voice.

"Doctor, he will be OK?"

"The Fflib can only be ejected by the host, but that hardly ever happens. The Fflib puts the host into a lucid dream state. Ryan can do anything, go anywhere, with anyone..." the Doctor trailed off.

"You're worried he won't want to wake up." said Graham.

"Would you, would any of us?" asked the Doctor.

They walked in silence until the Doctor stopped at a door, she glanced at Graham and opened it. Graham looked around the room as they entered, "I haven't been in this room before." he said, taking in the various items of technology scattered around the room.

"Don't touch anything, everything in here is dangerous." There was no mistaking the Doctor's serious tone.

"How dangerous?" asked Graham.

"End civilisation level dangerous." she replied.

"Why are we in here Doc?" Graham asked.

"There's something I need... to reach Ryan... it's..."

"Civilisation ending dangerous, what will it do to Ryan?" interjected Graham.

"It's dangerous in the wrong hands, the world I took it from barely survived. You need to trust me Graham, I know what I'm doing."

Graham nodded. "So what is it anyway... this thing you're looking for?"

"A mind probe." the Doctor replied, looking around the room. "Ah, there you are." she walked to the corner of the room and tugged at a trolley with a large control box on top and a metal cabinet fixed to its underside.

The trolley moved awkwardly, Graham stepped forward to help, "This thing is worse than a supermarket trolley." he said. With some difficulty, they managed to manoeuvre the trolley haphazardly along the corridors, eventually arriving back at the console room, to be greeted by a loud clicking sound. "What's that noise?" asked Graham.

"That's Ryan... or the Fflib?" replied Yaz. "It started just after you left."

The Doctor looked concerned. "It's learning faster than I had hoped. I'd better hurry this up." She adjusted the settings on the mind probe. "Oh, one more thing I need, a stasis chamber. It's in the med bay, two rights, one left and last door on the right." she said looking at Graham.

"What does it look like?" he asked.

"Can't miss it, big, silver, with Stasis Chamber Mark III prototype printed on the side."

Graham shook his head and set off to retrieve the Stasis Chamber.

"Stasis Chamber? So you want to keep the Fflib alive?" said Yaz.

"If possible, Ryan is the priority but..."

"Both would be better?" interrupted Yaz.

"Exactly." replied the Doctor.

A short time later Graham returned with the Stasis Chamber, "Wouldn't it make more sense to have the med bay closer to the console room?" he asked.

"I've never used it." replied the Doctor.

"Is that because it's so far away?" asked Graham.

The Doctor frowned for a second, "OK, here's the plan. The Fflib will be ejected from Ryan's head area... probably..."

"Probably?" repeated Yaz.

"It will exit through an orifice, most of them are in the head, so..." explained the Doctor.

"OK. I get it." interrupted Yaz. Graham chuckled.

"As I was saying, you have to catch it and put it in the Stasis Chamber..."

"Good thing I brought these then." interrupted Graham whilst holding up two sets of gauntlets.

"Where did you find those?" asked the Doctor.

"Med bay, with this." replied Graham tapping the Stasis Chamber with his free hand.

"I have no idea where they came from." the Doctor replied with a frown. After a brief pause she asked, "Everyone clear on the plan?"

Graham and Yaz nodded.

The Doctor opened the cabinet and pulled out two circular headsets. "Put this on Ryan's head, like this." instructed the Doctor. She placed one of the headsets on her head like a crown and handed the other to Yaz. Graham donned a pair of gauntlets, took the headset from Yaz and placed it on Ryan's head. The Doctor reached a hand out to touch a button on the mind probe control box, she paused, "No matter what happens, don't interfere."

"I don't like the sound of that." replied Graham.

"The mind probe can be... painful, whatever happens, please don't interfere." said the Doctor. Graham and Yaz nodded agreement. The Doctor pressed the button on the control box and closed her eyes.

Ryan waited as the rounders team captains picked their team mates. He was always among the first to be picked, but it was always nerve racking waiting, no one wanted to be last. "Ryan," the red team captain called, Ryan took a team vest and joined the red team members. A short time later Ryan was at batting position, he was watching the

bowler when he noticed a figure moving into his field of vision. The figure moved in front of the bowler, no one else seemed to notice. Ryan watched as the ball flew through the figure, he was so stunned he didn't swing the bat. The figure moved towards him, he took a step back. The figure moved closer.

"Ryan? Ryan can you hear me?" said a faint female voice. The voice seemed familiar but he couldn't place it. He looked at the figure, she looked vaguely familiar but he couldn't remember where he knew her from. His head hurt, he rubbed at his forehead. The bat slipped from his hand, but there was no thud as it hit the ground. He looked down but could see no bat, no ground, just black. Ryan looked up as the rest of the players faded into black, the only thing to remain was the woman. He closed his eyes tight, a few moments later he opened them again, and all was as it was before, the ground, the players, the bat and the bowler preparing to bowl the ball, he raised the bat in readiness.

The Doctor reached out and turned a dial on the control box without opening her eyes.

Ryan readied himself to kick the football, "Come on Ryan!" yelled Grace.

"Whose side are you on?" complained Graham who was waiting in goal. Grace laughed. Ryan smiled and took the shot. The football thundered past Graham into the goal. Grace cheered, Ryan laughed, Graham put his hands on his hips trying to look indignant but failed.

Aaron leaned out of the back door, "Five minute warning."

"Great, I'm starving." replied Graham heading towards the back door.

"Just like Graham, always hungry." said a female voice. Ryan looking around and saw a figure.

"Don't be too long out here, Ryan. Don't keep your mum waiting." said Grace before heading inside.

"I won't." replied Ryan.

"Ryan, look at me." said the female voice.

Ryan looked at her. "Are you a friend of Graham's?" he asked.

"Yes... yes I am. And a friend of yours." she replied.

"I... I don't remember." he muttered rubbing his forehead, his head hurt. "My head..."

"I know, it hurts. Please concentrate." she said.

Ryan looked at her, "Doctor?"

"Yes, that's it. Do you remember what happened?" the Doctor asked.

Ryan thought hard, "The caves... the creature... tentacles..." his eyes widened as he replied.

"The next thing I remember I was home. What happened?" he asked.

"The creature transmitted a parasite, it's taken over your body and put you in this dream realm, but it's not real. You have to wake up." the Doctor said. Ryan turned and looked towards the back door. "That's a really bad idea." said the Doctor.

"My mum's in there." said Ryan.

"You can't go in there. This is what the parasite does, it gives you a dream world where you can have whatever you want so you don't want to wake up. It controls your body while you stay here, but it's not real. You have to wake up." Ryan was staring at the back door. "Ryan, look at me." when he didn't turn the Doctor moved in front of him. "Ryan, take my hand." she said softly. Ryan looked at the Doctor for a moment and then at her hand, he finally reached for it. His hand passed right through hers, he tried again and again his hand passed right through hers.

"This isn't real is it?" he asked.

"I'm sorry, no, it's not." the Doctor replied.

Ryan stepped to the side and looked at the back door again. "Just for a minute, I could see her just for a minute."

"If you go in there you'll never want to wake up." said the Doctor softly.

"I miss her." said Ryan quietly.

"I know, but this, all this, is just a jumble of memories and wishful thinking. You can't go back, you can remember but you can't go back. You have to wake up."

Ryan nodded sadly. "What do I have to do?" he asked.

"Focus on something in the real world, something worth waking up for." said the Doctor. "Something, however small, that brings you joy."

In the console room Yaz and Graham were wearing gauntlets; they had been watching Ryan ever since the Doctor had activated the mind probe. Ryan's head started jerking.

"I think this is it," said Graham.

"I'm glad it's the head." replied Yaz.

As they watched a small slug like creature emerged from Ryan's left ear. Graham grabbed the Stasis Chamber and held the small transparent door open while Yaz grabbed the Fflib. She held it at arms length and deposited it inside the chamber, Graham closed the door quickly. They both exhaled with relief. Graham set the chamber on the floor, removed the gauntlets and moved to Ryan. At that moment Ryan woke up, "Eurgh." he said.

"Ryan?" said Graham concerned.

"He'll be fine, I incapacitated him, remember. It'll wear off soon." said the Doctor. She walked to the Stasis Chamber and studied the readings, "You made it." she said. "Time

to find you a new home." she moved to the console and set the controls.

A short time later the TARDIS landed. "Where the Fflib are we?" asked Graham with a smirk. Ryan tried to groan but it came out as a grunt.

"The planet Urgh-pah, it translates as Yuck. Unique planet, no naturally occurring resources of any value..." the Doctor paused her explanation for a moment, "Were you making a joke?" she asked Graham. Graham shrugged.

"No resources of any value, at all?" asked Yaz.

"None, whatsoever." replied the Doctor. "Take a look." she flicked a switch and the view screen was filled with a live image of Urgh-pah.

"It's beautiful." exclaimed Yaz. "What are those animals?" Graham moved to look at the view screen. The animals were similar to hamsters, the size of armadillos with shiny scales that reflected light.

"Those are why we are here, a new home for the Fflib, they don't really have a name. Like I said no natural resources, so no-one comes here.

"Those flowers, the colours..." said Yaz. "Why wouldn't anyone want to come here?"

"That view, build a hotel right there..." Graham pointed at an area on the view screen, "You could rake it in."

"You'll see when I open the door." replied the Doctor. She attached a device to the door of the Stasis Chamber. "Remote control. Don't want to be there when we release our friend." The Doctor picked up the chamber and headed for the door, "Would you mind?" she asked looking at Graham and Yaz. Yaz moved around the console and pulled the door lever. The door opened, a gush of pungent warm air filled the console room.

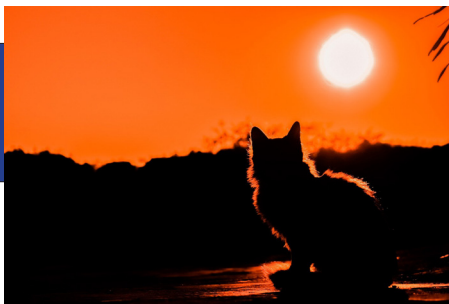
"What is that smell?" asked Graham covering his nose with his hand.

"Urgh-pah." replied the Doctor, "Now you know how it got its name." she smiled and walked outside with the Stasis Chamber. Yaz and Graham watched on the view screen as she walked a few feet, set down the chamber and then headed back to the TARDIS. As soon as she was inside Yaz closed the door. The Doctor walked to the console hit a few switches, looked up and listened as the ventilation system did its work. "There, that's better."

"I can still taste it." complained Graham.

The Doctor opened a compartment on the console and retrieved a bag of sweets, "Here have one of these." she said holding out the bag. Graham and Yaz took a sweet each. The Doctor walked to Ryan and popped a sweet into his mouth before taking one for herself. She walked to the view screen, pulled a remote control from her pocket and waited. The animals didn't seem interested in the chamber, they wandered aimlessly, eventually one of them moved close to the chamber. "Come on, a bit closer...there you go." she pressed a button on the remote and the chamber door flew open. The animal stumbled around for a few seconds before resuming its normal walking rhythm. The Doctor watched the screen for a moment before setting co-ordinates. She glanced back at the screen, hand poised on the dematerialisation lever. As she pulled down the lever, she whispered. "Happy trails." ▲





CREATION MYTHS By Richard Wright

Olive Hawthorne was sketching Rhadmanthus. It was something she often did, especially when nervous, if her cat deigned to keep still. But then Rhad was not really a cat.

Olive's delicate *pince-nez* occasionally caught the firelight as her head nodded with her pencil marks. She seemed in a trance: a restless disturbed one.

Then she had finished.

She turned from the sketch and poured herself a brandy. Her hands tremoured. "*I'm getting too old.*" she thought, but it was a rationalization... She was shaking from a dread unknown.

Olive settled in the armchair and wound up the gramophone. Arthur C Clarke had got it wrong when he said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology was indistinguishable from magic." He, like most men, did not understand the old ways... the alternative history, passed down through female inheritance.

Take the gramophone - *the ritual of the winding, the tension in the coiled spring. The placing of the vinyl on to the rotating platform, the careful insertion of the needle into the first groove. The crackles of imperfection, the harmonics of amplification. The gentle warmth of the friction in all the moving parts. The wholeness/richness of the analogue sound. The many men; their concentration, their energy, hours and hours of creative engineering. Only vaguely aware that it was old magic that had been made.*

The record album Olive put on was *Time* by ELO. She had bought it on impulse, for 20 pence at the fête to raise money for a new church hall... the hall that had become the new church in Devil's End.

Just on the border of your waking mind, there lies another time, where darkness and light are one...

Before the first lyric had finished Olive was asleep.

Rhadmanthus uncurled from his position and strolled round to see how his mistress had captured his current cat form. He hissed, his back arched, his fur stood... In the sketch one of his eyes had been replaced by a detail of a broken clock face.

Olive dreamed of the *dæmon* under the exploding church and *an unknown gothic building imploding*; of her rugged soldier bowed on a flagstone beaten by spirits and then standing by her against a living gargoyle; *but the gargoyle transformed into a rearing serpent-slug with a gaping mouth of writhing red tentacles.*

Finally Olive dreamed of the Doctor. Someone she had not thought of in a long time.

The flat screen TV looked incongruous in the front room of the small gatekeeper's cottage. On screen a man in a white suit smiled a discreet smile. His suit was expensively, intelligently, cut to blend business wear with a science lab coat. The surprising thing was... The look worked.

"There have always been ghosts here. I built my research centre on this site to continue Doctor Fendelman's research, to honour

his memory. As you know I funded a lot of the original work here and the explosion fractured..." The man stopped oddly for a second, but then the enigmatic smile was back..." As the explosion destroyed so much that I have had to rebuild."

A sudden disturbance in the crowd and something struck the man's cheek leaving an eggy sooty stain. The man showed no emotion. He pulled a handkerchief from his top pocket and gently wiped it away.

"You are tampering with forces you don't understand." The woman who shouted was stout, almost shapeless, grey haired, her red face wrinkled like a winter-preserved apple, but her eyes were bright.

"Grandma Tyler, you are right, I am here because I don't understand, but I intend to." His voice conveyed both arrogant disdain and charming tolerance."

"I b'aint your Grandma. I've said my piece." She turned and the cameras followed her for a little way but...

"Ladies and Gentlemen..." His full on charm pulled the cameras back onto his face. "...of the Press. I beg Mrs Tyler's pardon. I respect her as the voice of local, shall we say, old fashioned fears? But I am here to lay ghosts to rest with bright new technology"

"Bah" Grandma Tyler mashed her hand down on the remote control. The screen went off, but the red standby light mocked her. With great effort she knelt and pulled the plug.

There was a knock, then several random knocks on the door - and giggling. Halloween Trick or Treaters. Grandma Tyler's face transformed. She got up, gathered up her big brown shopping bag and went to the door. She opened it to a group of various sized creatures.... There were some with the classic sheets with holes for eyes, some with rubber ghoul masks, some with inventive blood stains, one with a rubber axe stuck into a bald head cap.... As was tradition the village children had come to her en masse.

At the back stood a lanky figure, in a hockey mask, holding an oversized rubber knife. Granny Tyler pointed at him."Be that you Jason?" The boy lifted the mask and it was Jason, a kind lad who helped with his father's dairy herd. "Bit old for Trick or Treating ain't thee boy?"

"Still got a sweet tooth Ma." Grandma Tyler felt a tug at her heart, the boy reminded her of her grandson John, or Jack, as he had liked to be known.

"Trick or treat." It was Maisy dressed as a Goth. She had a pillowcase full of eggs and flour and a glint of something wicked in her eye.

"You planning to make some cakes tonight young Maisy Tanner?" The girl stepped back, the white make-up hid a flush of embarrassment, but she was defiant. "Trick or treat."

Grandma Tyler opened her brown bag to reveal lots of smaller plump white paper bags. "*The trick* is whether your heart be full of *slinky sneaky Maisy* or sweetness." The children each took a bag.

She watched them walk away, smiled, turned and shut the door.

The children opened their bags, each had sticks of natural liquorice. When Maisy tried to bite hers it wriggled like a snake and she dropped her bag to the ground. A ghost sheet girl stifled a laugh. Maisy reached down, her hand closed on a month-rotted egg. Jason gently shook his hockey-masked head and Maisy laughed. A darkness lifted off her. Maisy told the others what had happened and they were impressed. They passed their liquorice around and began the short back walk back to Fetchborough.

Ma Tyler settled in her armchair, lifted the tray off the coffee table and onto her lap. She cast the runes again. It was clear that the Doctor was coming, yet opaque beyond that.

There was a rumble of distant thunder. Large raindrops spat on the facets of her windows, driven by an increase in the wind. The storm was partly phantasmal, not unusual for Fetchborough when the veil was thin at Halloween. The village kids would run to avoid getting too wet, their Halloween washed out for this year.



laid out three of her best china teacups. "White tea?"

"Please."

Olive looked round. The large, black, dead, screen of the TV drew her eyes to the reflection of the runes on the tray. Ma saw her reaction."TV was my grandson's." Olive

noticed the many cat ornaments on the sideboard, but there was no sense of a real cat. One small photo of a middle aged, mischievous looking man. Olive did not need to ask, to know, that it was Ma's grandson.

"I did the summoning because there is a man, if he be a man, that has built on the ruins of the Priory..."

"...I have seen it in my dreams..." Olive dropped her head in apology for interrupting.

"He has built on the ruins with his wretched science. He is powerful.... cold magic... like this TV of zeros and ones. I only know of the Doctor who straddles both the ancient old and the cold new."

'...where darkness and light are one...' Olive still had ELO in her head.

The two white witches sat together and shared their stories. The difference in their Doctors was immediately clear. "Think he be a shape shifter?"

"He had something of the impish, something of the beast, but kind."

"He be an ancient. That was clear."

"Mortal though?" Both nodded recognizing this as a statement.

"Some might mistake ee for more than mortal though..."

There was a knock at the door, a rap of wood on wood. Ma Tyler thought for a second that Maisy had returned, perhaps the *suggestion* had been misjudged?

The knock again. Now it was clear it was a witch's knock of three.

Ma Tyler lay the tray of runes aside, taking her time. She had not the energy she had had for the children.

From the doorstep an elderly woman, with a woollen shawl on her shoulders peered at Ma Tyler with piercing green eyes, through her pince-nez. Her green umbrella strained in the wind, her hand white tight on its raven carved handle. "You summoned. I am here."

"I did not summon 'ee."

"You have summoned the Doctor." Her voice was slightly shrill against the wind. "And that summoned me."

"Best you come in. Fire is laid, just needs a match. Mrs Tyler, Ma Tyler, Grandma, Granny Tyler...I goes by any."

"Miss Hawthorne, Olive Hawthorne, glad to make your acquaintance Ma."

"Likewise, Olive".

Olive entered. Without asking she bent and lit the fire. Ma set the kettle on the gas and

"Yes but in his realm, of science, he recognises no gods." Olive's own convictions faltered. Hers was a realm of spirits and faeries - she feared the Doctor's where a dæmon was an alien, its powers only a form of energy.

Outside there came another sound, a sigh of hope greater than the voice of the storm. The two witches watched the door.

There were two taps. Flesh on wood. Followed by two more.... Not a witch's knock but, it's simple two beat repeat, parodied one.

Olive rose and opened the cottage door.

A hooded figure stood on the doorstep. Olive stepped aside and it entered. It was shorter than the Doctor that either had met before.

The hood was thrown back to reveal a scruffy light bob of hair and a goofy faced young lady.

"Brilliant. A hat stand. I love a hat stand." She hung her hooded cloak over it.

She looked at Ma Tyler and Miss Hawthorne.

"Why am I here? Don't tell me... Granny Weatherwax still rocking the headology?" She held out her hand to Ma Tyler. Ma looked at it and noticed the burnt imprint of a Yale Key on the palm. The woman turned to Olive. "And Magrat Garlick. Hang on a minute, that's too weird.... that would make me Nanny Ogg."

"I summoned ee. Do you know who yee are yet?"

"Summoned me. No the TARDIS summoned me. See the key." She held out her palm. "Then the time fissure widened so the TARDIS brought me here.

"You b'aint the Doctor yet".

"Yes and no... Watcher. " She touched her face.. "More Cho-Je than waxy white this time.... not expected to leave the forest....

the time had not really been prepared for." The woman paused in her talk as she gazed, intently, round

"It's Mrs Tyler and Miss Hawthorne. I am getting memories now. Best china and I am sure there must be fruit cake somewhere too." The Watcher saw the picture of John Tyler amongst the cat ornaments.

"I am sorry for your loss of Jack."

"It's life. He were good boy. Went back to the earth leaving it a better place."

"..Surely, the spirits?" Olive realised she had interrupted again.

"John he were an earthy sort. No truck with spirits. 'Tis peace and rest for him."

"Why am I here?" The Watcher asked again.

"Cos I summoned ee."

"No it can't be that. It's this." Somehow the woman just reached into the papers, stacked by the fire, and pulled out the local one with the picture of 'that man' on the front.

"That's Scaroth."

They talked through the night. Fruit cake was brought out. Ma told how she had thrown the reveal charm, of duck egg and ash of ash, but it had not yielded a true form.

"He wears a physical mask, not a perception filter."

They talked of the power of the three, but the Watcher denied the ability to form a gestalt of witches. In the morning it was decided that the Watcher would visit Scaroth alone.

"I'll talk to him." She said. The two witches accepted that the magic of words would be the first weapon they would wield.

She was passed on quickly by the secretary and guards. All she had to do was smile faintly and talk posh. She wondered if she might not need the psychic paper so much now.

"My dear," said Scaroth, "Who exactly are you." He waved her to take a seat. The chair was obviously antique and in beautiful condition. The whole room was full of old fashioned values that her memories were not complete enough to identify. Only important things, like the writings, of Terry Pratchett, were clear to her as yet.

"I think it would be beneficial and truthful enough, if you regard me as a splinter of the Doctor, as you are a splinter of Scaroth. You are not the same one I met in Paris?"

"Would you like a drink?" The man poured her a blue cocktail.

"I don't know, kind of a new mouth, but I like the colour." She accepted it and sipped cautiously.

"No, I am not Scarlioni. I felt his death when he returned from the beginning of life on Earth. Murdered. The butler did it." The man had the same face and smile of Scarlioni, but his manner was different. "I think it will be beneficial and truthful enough if you think of me as a wiser older of twin."

"You are Scaroth then, the last fragment of the Jagaroth?"

"The explosion of my ship created all life and splintered me through time. I gave these humans both fire and the wheel. My other shards wanted to unite and undo this, but I made this world Doctor...."

"I have put a lot of work into it myself.... I suppose I am the Doctor now"

"I knew you would come Doctor... if I widened the time fissure here." Scaroth put down his drink. "Please let me show you, my work, so that you might help me." He gestured to an inner door. The Doctor plugged her drink and

got up. She paused, surprised at the cold on her lips and the fire in her throat.

"Help you to what? You are the last of the Jagaroth, I can't change that."

Beyond the small oak door was a narrow featureless concrete tunnel that spiralled lazily downwards. They walked awhile in silence. The Doctor swayed slightly.

"...Morbis. One of the most..."

"Doctor?"

"Sorry. I didn't think I had said that out loud."

The tunnel ended in a metal security door with an entry coder.

The Doctor fished in her pockets, but her hands turned up empty. "Sorry don't appear to have my screwdriver." She put her hands to her eyes. "Or sunglasses either... Oh?" The Doctor noticed the mark of the TARDIS key had faded from her palm.

"Allow me." Scaroth, gently eased her to the side and tapped in a six digit code. The door clicked and Scaroth opened it, gesturing for the Doctor to enter first.

Inside was expensive equipment: gold, mercury, lenses of emerald, and a hum of power.

The Doctor gave a long low whistle... a bit too long as it left her slightly out of breath.

Scaroth reached up and peeled off his face to reveal a single burning eye amidst a riot of green tentacles. "Help me to stabilise this form and take me to a planet that I might live away from these jumped up apes." Scaroth's true voice was deeper and raw with pain and longing.

'Is this really going to be my new self? Summoned all the time and no evil plans?' Thought the Doctor. ▲



REQUIEM AMONG THE STARS PART 3

**By Nathan Mullins
and Cameron Holt**

"Sensing the end isn't a good sign, because if you think that, then you'll have already given up. When you do that, you lose hope, you lose your belief, and then perhaps the end will come and you won't be ready for it. If you think there's still time, if you put your faith in something you believe to be true, maybe... just maybe... you'll live, and all that hope will see you through."

"Profound words, Doctor," said the Professor. Prof. James Strong was Head of the Science Core on the Agra-farm, where all hell was breaking loose. He and the Doctor were standing in the Professor's laboratory. It was late. His team of Scientists were dead, but their work had shown promise. It was why they had to die. "We can't contain it. The virus... it's killing our people. They're dying, daily."

"Because what's controlling it is feeding on the fear of your people. It's the servant of its master, doing its dirty work. Your people, albeit terrified of this monstrosity, aren't doing themselves any favours, acting on the orders of your planet's leaders. 'Lock yourselves indoors', I've heard them declare. 'It won't find you inside your homes.' I can tell you that's rubbish. The virus spreads where its master tells it to."

The Doctor stopped short as she observed the microscopes on the desks about her. The Professor's own team of scientists had been analysing slides of blood taken from the victims of the virus. The Doctor shook her head in dismay. She went on with what she'd been saying.

"Its master, whoever that might be- and I imagine that you know exactly who or what's behind it- uses thought control to get into the mindset of how this thing spreads and concentrates on sending it out to kill those who stand in its path. So far... it's targeted your associates. Will it come for you next, I wonder?"

"You're trying to scare me. You want me to..." he stopped. "You want me to tell you what I know?"

"You had better, because listen to that..."

He could hear a sound like running water, as if a tap had been left on somewhere.

"What is that?"

"The inevitable. Your death, unless you tell me what I want to know!"

The door rattled as what looked like a dirty great earthworm crept below it. But it wasn't like the earthworms of Earth. And it most certainly wasn't a virus.

"What is it?" trembled the professor. "That's not a virus! That can't be what's behind the murders. The samples of blood we took from the victims suggested that what killed them had in fact infected them."

"You're right. It's not a virus. Or... perhaps you're not familiar with precisely what a drill worm is..."

"A drill worm?"

"Yes..." said the Doctor, the fear apparent in her voice. "They jump inside your body and riddle you with plague. They're not in control of themselves but the puppets of a higher intellect. They're controlled by thought alone, but not by any mere mortal, so you shouting 'get back' in your head won't make the slightest bit of difference I'm afraid."

"How..." began the professor, trying to get the words out. "How do they enter the body?"

"Did you not hear me say it was called a *drill worm*?"

As it wriggled towards them, the Doctor reached for a large container on the desk nearest to her and made an attempt to shift it across, but it missed the worm as it shuffled forward.

"Grab me that bunsen burner!" yelled the Doctor. "Failing that, the liquid it's heating up!"

The professor managed to snatch both from another desk next to him, passing them across.

"First the liquid," she said, dashing it at the worm as it pulled itself upright to get the Doctor and the Professor's scents. "It didn't like what was in that bottle," she added. It began to thrash its tail and its body until it began to writhe in agony. "Don't think we'll be needing the Bunsen burner after all," she said, placing it back on the desk beside her. The creature began to sink back down to the floor and collapsed in a heap. As the Doctor and the professor approached, the worm exploded in a gooey mess.

"Well, that takes care of that," said the Doctor, peeling away the slime from her coat, "And also the deaths of other men, women, and children on this planet."

"Not quite," said the professor. "Because whatever was controlling it and using it to get to me is still out there. And I don't doubt that it knows what terrible fate has befallen

its... *pet*. It'll be coming for me. What good is having hope if you know the end is inevitable?"

The Doctor shot him a concerned look but no longer felt as if she could trust him. She knew he would betray her, if her words no longer convinced him.

"What have you done that's so bad, that's not just cost the lives of your friends but plunged your planet into danger?"

At first, James was unsure of how to answer that. It was true that he hadn't spared a thought for those whose lives had been lost. It was true that he cared more about saving his own skin than anyone who happened to be in the same room. But now he was certain that he had no future; any information was worthless because no matter what he did with it, he was going to end up dead. He remained silent but his eyes told the Doctor he was terrified. They both knew this and he turned away in anger.

Then he realised that as a scientist he was being foolish (which was a scientist's prerogative anyway), and then relented.

"You'd better follow me."

He led the Doctor deep below the laboratory into some underground caves. The path they took was dark and gloomy and James took with him a lantern he'd lit to light the way.

"Where are we going?" asked the Doctor. She said it in a whisper. Any louder, she thought, and the cave would come down on top of them.

"Into darkness," answered James, his voice trembling with fear. "All I ask is that you forgive me."

"Why? What for?"

James came to a halt. There was a door ahead that he opened with his key card. Only he had special access. The door hissed open and inside was a sealed glass chamber with

what looked like a child within; except horns protruded from its head, and its hands were more like the claws of a wild animals. Its body was covered in ceremonial robes but from the way it had been treated they could have doubled as bandages. The child was propped up by wires which came down from top to bottom and at both sides of the glass prison.

"What is this?" demanded the Doctor. "What the hell have you done?"

"You're right," said James. "This is my doing. But it was done to save my planet, my people, my home."

"Your planet? Your people? Your home?" repeated the Doctor. "You selfish piece of..."

The child's eyes opened and scanned the room. They saw the anger in the Doctor's eyes, her voice, her heart, and then the child screamed.

"It's just a reflex," said James. "There's nothing to worry about!"

"Yes, there is," replied the Doctor. "Look!"

There were worms the size of enormous barrels shooting up from the ground.

"It's her," said the Doctor.

"But she isn't awake?!"

"I know. She's barely alive. But she has incredible power over these creatures. And that power must be all she has left to defend herself with. She's no ordinary child, as I'm sure you've gathered by now? She's an Osiran. How you could be so cruel as to keep her pegged up down here, for this long is disgraceful. Shame on you!"

"She's a danger, Doctor. She's trouble. You just don't know enough about her to see why I was forced to do this."

"Stand beside me," the Doctor urged him. "I'm going to save your life if you put your trust in me."

"What do you have in mind?"

"I'm going to save her," said the Doctor. "I'm going to rescue her from this dungeon. And I'm going to free her from this living hell that you've put her through."

"You'll have to do something about these worms first!"

"Get behind me," she urged him.

She raised her sonic screwdriver and hit the switch. The glass prison began to rise, but the worms still wriggled towards them.

"It's not doing anything!" he yelled, backing slowly into a corner.

"It won't do, yet."

"Then what good is it freeing the child, if it won't stop those beasts?"

"Do you know what you failed at when you did this to her?" began the Doctor. "Communication. We're going to have to convince her our intentions aren't hostile. We're going to have to break through her control, and as you were behind all this, Professor... I think you ought to attempt to put things right."

"No, Doctor, I will not do as you command. I did this to..."

"You did this to save your own skin and because you thought you were being clever. You were in fact putting everyone else's lives at risk, so get out there and make amends!"

"No... I..." he trembled.

His eyes were fixed on the Doctor, then the worms, and then on nothing as an excruciating pain took hold of his senses. He looked down and saw his left foot being torn from him. A Drill Worm had it between its pincers, which thrashed as it tossed it aside. The Doctor made an attempt to drag him to safety but she was overpowered. The other

worms fought over him. There was what looked like a game of tug of war.

"Help me!" he screamed. "Doctor... Save me! Please!"

But the creatures' grip was too strong and they succeeded in taking the professor, pulling at him until his flesh drew blood and he was concealed in darkness. The Doctor was left breathless and uncertain about her chances.

She stood up, brushed herself down, and noticed the path was clear, as she approached the young Osiran. The child's eyes flickered but remained half closed.

"Can you hear me?" asked the Doctor.

There was no response.

"Can you understand me?"

The Doctor began to examine her. Curious, she ran the sonic over her dying body, and a wave of energy hit her, perhaps the child's last grasp over reality. The Doctor was flung backwards and left puzzled.

"Ouch!" she mumbled, feeling achy from her ordeal. "Let's try that again, without the sonic."

She used a hair clip to pick the locks on the chains that James had used to tie her up. The child dropped to the floor, lifeless and cold.

"Oh no," said the Doctor, scooping her up into her arms. "Hold on!" she urged her. "Stay with me! You can do this!"

With time running out, the Doctor began to run back down the tunnels that led to James' laboratory, then back out onto the plains of Sirius IV in search of the TARDIS. Occasionally, she had to stop and get her breath, lower the child and raise the strength. It was no easy task.

And then she reached her ship, which seemed much further away than she had

remembered, perhaps a side effect of freak weather conditions resulting in subsidence, she concluded.

Sirius IV had been known for violent sandstorms that battered anything and everything in its path. Sand dunes had covered the landscape and re-shaped the surroundings. Any remnant of civilisation was now lost, buried below ground. It was as if the sudden change was a punishment, served on all that lived on the planet.

"This sort of atmospheric disturbance is wrong," mused the Doctor, but there wasn't time to think things through. And there was something more curious still. None of it was a natural phenomenon. As she reached the TARDIS, she opened the doors and went below deck, where she found the re-instated zero room that had once been used to save her own life.

The Doctor planted the Osiran into the system and hoped for the best. She sealed the doors, giving her maximum peace and quiet, and really wished that what she had done would be enough to save her.

There was a pulse but it was fading. The Doctor knew that the zero room could heal a newly regenerated Time Lord but did not know what the effect would be on some other alien species. If she didn't make it, then she would at least rest in eternal peace. The Doctor knew from past experience that to get the best out of the zero room, probably meant she'd need to hang a 'do not disturb' sign on the door for at least 10,000 years, just to see the results. The Doctor's own experience of it had been limited to around fifteen minutes, but she knew the child would benefit from total restoration.

The Doctor returned to the console room and left the planet behind. The TARDIS set off into time and space taking the Doctor to find adventures across the galaxy, not knowing where or when her future would take her.

Now it was starting to come back to her. How could she have forgotten? She had visited Sirius IV before, of course she had. And now here she was again, she and her friends had just fled the very same planet. The newly awakened ancient being was on the rampage, as it sought out that very special something aboard the TARDIS, the young Osiran that the Doctor had saved the last time she was here. How could she have forgotten about her.

"We're done for!" said Ryan, drawing breath.

"Do you really believe that?" asked the Doctor. "After everything we've been through?"

"But it's in the TARDIS, Doc. That thing... with all its mysterious powers..." Graham wasn't sure how any of them could fight something as powerful as an Osiran. "What are we going to do?"

"Hey, anything's possible," said Yasmin. "Have a little hope, Graham! Look at how far we've come!"

"Yeah, but..." spluttered Graham.

"But nothing Grandad!" said Ryan. "Come on! What are you doing? We're a team! Yaz is right! By showing willingness and determination, you can conquer anything! Like how I deal with dyspraxia," he added.

"I couldn't have put it better myself," agreed the Doctor. "And do you know what? You're brilliant. You're all super! And together, we're going to fight back and stop whatever this Osiran's up to!"

But the terrible memories of what had happened before were returning. The Osiran that had entered the TARDIS had a clear purpose, one the Doctor was trying to make sense of. There was something it wanted, and she knew it was time to face her demons. With a brave heart, she along with her friends went in search of the Osiran.

To be concluded... ▲

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EDGE OF TIME REVIEW

by Matthew Toffolo

It is probably safe to assume that every Doctor Who fan has dreamed of spotting the TARDIS materialise in an ordinary everyday location, wandering inside it to marvel at the incredible scale of the control room within before being whisked away to a totally different world sitting outside those Police Box doors. Well, now that dream is a reality, a virtual one at that.

Doctor Who: The Edge of Time is the series' first foray into the world of virtual reality after the short interactive episode of The Runaway earlier in 2019, but here developers Maze Theory and Playstack have produced a fully interactive game that allows you to explore beyond the confines of the TARDIS and delve into five incredibly realised locations based in the present, the past and far off alien worlds in the future. Guided by the Doctor,

voiced by Jodie Whittaker, you travel to these locations in search for Time Crystals in order to help the Doctor save the universe from a virus that is pulling it apart. So a pretty normal day in the Doctor's world. In order to find the crystals, you are given a copy of the Doctor's Sonic Screwdriver and use it to solve various escape room-style puzzles to progress through the game, and honestly zapping a door with the Sonic and watching it woosh open in front of you never gets old.

There is no easy way to describe being in VR other than you feel like you are actually inside the video game and any trailers you may have watched does not do the experience any justice. The overall aesthetic draws its inspiration from the current version of the series with its dim lighting and deep shadow, particularly in the early sections of



the game, and Richard Wilkinson's score is suitably atmospheric and very much in the flavour of Segun Akinola's work on the series, with perhaps a flourish or two of Murry Gold thrown in for good measure. Combine this with the incredible render of the TARDIS control room and the feeling of ducking out of sight from Daleks, then you have a cocktail that makes you feel like you are living an episode of the TV series.

The atmosphere is key to the success of The Edge of Time and there are plenty of scares to be had. You may enter the game with gusto but when I found myself wandering through an alien forest in the dead of night with only a torch and the sound of strange creatures scurrying around in the gloom, well it's safe to say I felt more than a little uncomfortable. Likewise, the Weeping Angel segment (the narrative of which is a sequel to a much loved Classic Who story) keeps you on your toes as ghostly voices whisper in your ear. I am not ashamed to say that I jumped out of my skin during this part, which was the source of much amusement for my co-workers eating their lunch at the time.

However, the Edge of Time does fall flat in a few places particularly when it comes to the game mechanics. At times the controls feel a little clunky, which may be a side effect of VR technology being in its infancy. Something as simple as closing the TARDIS door or twisting a dial on the console feels a little cumbersome while winding up an old gramophone recorder works incredibly well. The decision to aim at targets simply by looking at them in the game's final act was not only challenging to control but felt almost counterintuitive. Perhaps that's because we are so used to using joysticks to aim at things in games, or perhaps it is because the player is very much aware that the weapon in question does not fire blasts from head height. You instinctively want to use your left hand to fire at the enemies approaching you only to discover you that you can't. That aside there is still a lot of fun to be had during that sequence. There is also the question of repetitiveness in one of the most successful sections of the game where

you have to repeat a particular scenario a good three or four times. This moment is very tense the first couple of times but by the end of it you will have sussed out the pattern and any fear of getting caught out will be non-existent. Likewise, the game's conclusion lacks the punch that you'd hope for both in terms of gameplay and narrative.

Overall The Edge of Time is an incredibly fulfilling VR experience for any Doctor Who fan as it creates the most authentic sensation of being in a Doctor Who adventure than anything that has come before it (sorry Doctor Who Experience), and as a video game it is one of the better ones to feature the Doctor Who name attached. However, the elephant in the room when discussing this game is the matter of "is it worth the cost"? As the game is only playable in VR you are looking at somewhere between £200-400 for a headset in order to play it, depending on the platform you are using, which when you consider that the game lasts roughly three hours is an incredible expense. I was fortunate enough to play the whole thing at work on the office's Oculus Rift S and as much as I love Doctor Who and enjoyed the game I would not run off to buy my own headset to do it again.

The Edge of Time gives us a glimpse at the power of VR and what it is capable of achieving in the Doctor Who universe, but it leaves you wishing that we could see a much larger game that allows us to explore more familiar locations like the ice tombs of Telos, or the Panopticon on Gallifrey, maybe even getting the chance to wander around more of the TARDIS and pilot it in some of the old control rooms... The possibilities are endless and hopefully, it is something we will get to see more of in the future. ▲

The Edge of Time is available for various PC VR platforms from Steam, or physical copies are available for the PS4 through the normal retailers.



MCM LONDON COMIC CON 2019 EVENT REVIEW

by Rik Moran



Held at London ExCeL, the experience starts as you walk up the embankment, passing various Deadpools, Harley Quinns and other assorted attendees. A range of stars from TV and film were also in attendance and available for panels, photos and autographs.

It's layout, content and organisation was top notch giving enough room to walk up and down the aisles, browsing for artwork and more.

A wide range of pop-culture focused brands were in attendance and selling their wares, including a huge Funko booth (which was like a mini-store inside the con!) I've personally never liked Funko pops. But they were everywhere! So someone certainly does!

If you're a fan of comics, the Comic Village would have been heavenly for you – dozens of artists, writers and more lined the area,

many happy to stop and chat and perhaps even illustrate you if you felt so inclined!

There's a gaming area for those of you into that with both XBOX and Playstation having areas, plus numerous games being demonstrated that you could trial.



The Film & TV industry had a big presence with lots of panels with exclusive announcements and clips or even full episode screenings. Some of the Films & TV that were at MCM London Comic Con were: IT, See, The End of the F***ing World, Dracula (which has Doctor Who's Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat on the panel) War of the Worlds, Alex Rider, Inside Britannia and of course Doctor Who and others, it was of course Doctor Who that I was really here for, sadly modern Doctor Who was only really represented by the TARDIS prop and some costumes on display, there was the Virtual Reality game The Edge of Time being demonstrated and there was quite a queue of people waiting to give the game a try, it's not my cup of tea, I was much more interested in the panels that Doctor Who was going to have which were: The Collection, which featured the team behind The Collection series of Blu-Ray releases, I loved this, I really enjoy hearing about all the in's and out's that go into making these. I must say Mark Ayers really goes above and beyond with the work he does on the sound. The big takeaway from this panel,



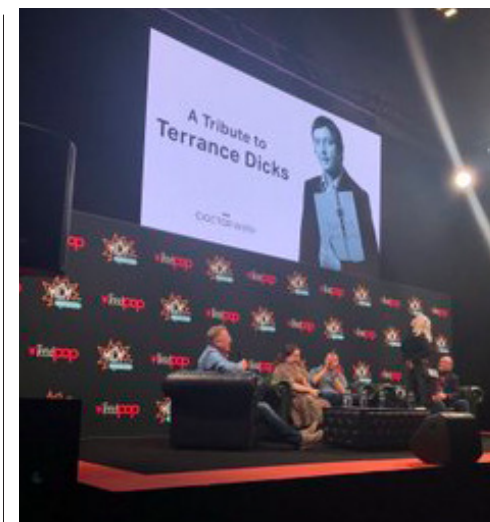
was that the Series 12 set would be getting a further limited run of copies, which I'm sure made many fans happy. It was also good to see some clips from the at time of writing upcoming season 26.



The next panel was: The Animations, which had members of the animation teams, yes, teams, there's now two teams working on the animations releases! There were clips from The Faceless Ones, the announcement and clips of Fury From The Deep which was met with huge enthusiasm from the audience in attendance.



3rd Doctor Who panel was: Publishing, which had writers and artists and publishers from various Doctor Who titles all giving little insights into what they do. Sadly I felt this panel was a little short, and could have done with an extra 15 mins or so, just to give it a little bit longer to have gone a bit deeper.



The final panel for Doctor Who at the event, was the Tribute to Terrance Dicks Panel, which did exactly what it said on the tin.

In conclusion, I really enjoyed this event, and comparing it with Showmasters London Film & Comic Con, I'd say this is the better event, The staff were helpful and friendly and the organisation very well done, the event itself, is more Industry led, then Showmasters which is guest led. My biggest complaint was about how hot it was, I felt like I was being slow-cooked. I don't know how the cosplayers coped. Aside from that MCM London Comic Con was a great event and I look forward to seeing what future presence Doctor Who will have at MCM events. ▲





REVIEW: THE MACRA TERROR

By Bedwyr Gullidge

"There's no such thing as Macra!"

You've barely scratched the surface of the myriad of bonus features included on your Season 18 Blu-Ray boxset when you are treated to another release from the golden era of Doctor Who!

It has been well established that animation provides an effective method of presenting Doctor Who's numerous missing episodes. Back in 2006 'The Invasion' was released onto DVD with the missing Episodes 1 and 4 recreated using animation. It would take another seven years, but we'd eventually have the gaps filled for stories such as 'The Tenth Planet', 'The Ice Warriors' and 'The Moonbase' with animated episodes. (Plus of course we had yet another version of Shada.) 'Power of the Daleks' would however be a turning point.

Released onto the now defunct BBC Store at the precise 40th anniversary, 'Power of the Daleks' was the first fully animated recreation of a full Doctor Who adventure missing from the archives since the junking of recordings in the 1970's. Assisted by the Daleks' continuing appeal, it proved to be a fruitful endeavour and the success of the release has led the way for 'The Macra Terror'. That success has provided money and, crucially, time to deliver a phenomenal



product and the best Doctor Who animation to date.

The Macra Terror

The seventh story of Season 4 sees the Second Doctor, Polly, Ben and Jamie arrive on another human colony. All seems pretty idyllic, but the truth is far more horrible. 'The Macra Terror' is a story with depth beyond a simple 'base under siege' epitomised by the monster era of the following season. The revelation of the real power behind the throne is a bold plot twist at a time when Doctor Who rarely attempted them. Additional themes of brainwashing society through propaganda and how blind obedience to the authority can prove catastrophic are also explored. The colonists are encouraged to work but provided leisure time. All the while the messages from Control convince the people that all is well. As the plot gently develops, the Controller proves not to be the man seen on screen. It's all a touch Orwellian.

Provided more money, and therefore more time, to work on this new animation the results are spectacular. It is without question the smoothest animation produced for a Doctor Who release. Little character movements, although a minor detail, add so much to the final product. A slight cut has been made with the removal of the TARDIS crew's treatments in the Refreshing Department. Fortunately, this short scene has no bearing on the plot and isn't really missed.

As the accompanying production notes booklet confirms only a single Macra creature was constructed, plus a claw for close up shots. Frazer Hines and Anneke Wills have often told the stories of how ineffectual

the designed creature proved to be on set. For instance, being caught by the Macra involved placing your leg inside the claw as its movement was so limited. Using animation manages to correct this problem. In addition to having multiple Macra on screen at the same time, the animated creatures are far more impressive. Their movement is far more natural, with shots of crawling crab legs which would've been absent from the original production now achieved through animation.

The final result is therefore an even better version of 'The Macra Terror' than we probably would get if the four film cans containing the original transmitted episodes turned up tomorrow. Over four episodes there is drama, intrigue and a great mix of tones. Quirky muzak and propagandist tunes, paired with impressively rounded characters and an imposing monster, this is high quality Doctor Who. Hopefully, this new release will give fans an opportunity to reassess this excellent example of classic Troughton era storytelling.

Bonus Features

On this new release the animation is available to watch in bright multicolour or the atmospheric monochrome palette of the 1960's. If you're not a fan of animated Doctor Who, and I'm not sure why you wouldn't be, then reconstructions are available using a combination of telesnaps and the original audio. These reconstructions can also be enjoyed with or without narration provided by Anneke Wills. The minor cuts from the animated first episode are also included if you are curious about those short sequences. Of course, the less than 2 minutes of surviving footage from the story is presented to provide a feel for the transmitted material. Additionally, the opening 10 minutes of an animated 'The Wheel in Space' is included. This also looks very impressive and hopefully will be followed by a full release for that adventure featuring the Cybermen.

As is customary on these releases, an audio commentary is also provided. Joining

moderator Toby Hadoke for Episodes 1 and 4 are Frazer Hines (Jamie) and Maureen Lane (Majorette) with Anthony Gardner (Alvis) joining them for the first instalment. Plus, there are interviews with Terence Lodge (Medok) and Director John Davies that cover the remaining two episodes. Hadoke is the ideal lead voice on these commentaries, directing the conversation and drawing out memories from the contributors. He is also a fountain of knowledge that comes in very handy when helping tease those stories out of actors. Despite recording taking place more than 50 years ago the reminiscences make for a great listen to accompany the animated visuals. Of course, the Macra creature prop is discussed but the conversation isn't entirely focused on 'The Macra Terror' or even Doctor Who, such as Frazer Hines' dating escapades.

Although it is a little disappointing that there is no formal 'making of' documentary, perhaps that is being saved for the Season 4 Blu-Ray boxset, there is still plenty of additional material to sink your teeth into.

Behind the Scenes

A hidden gem within this new release is footage from Shawcraft Models. Narrated by an appropriate expert voice in Mike Tucker, his insight really adds to the visuals. For example, his comments about Shawcraft working with fibreglass without gloves, masks or any protective equipment highlights the simpler time of the 1960's. No health and safety brigade to keep them safe here!

Within that footage is perhaps the very best opportunity to appreciate the size and design of the Macra creature. Positioned next to a standard Dalek prop really emphasises the scale. Unfortunately, within that bulk was a lack of articulation. Given the film also shows the Shawcraft team working on a model for the 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' movie it is perhaps no surprise that an item for a much smaller budget production like Doctor Who was not as well realised. Despite the flawed lack of articulation, the Macra creature still makes for an impressive and imposing sight.

Steelbook Exclusive

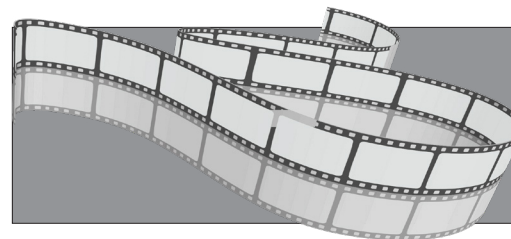
For those who purchase the steelbook edition there is a bonus disc which has to rank alongside some of the most utterly pointless pieces of Doctor Who merchandise. The Macra returned to Doctor Who in 2007's 'Gridlock' and that episode is included on this steelbook exclusive disc. It is accompanied by the Doctor Who Confidential episode, cutdown to under 12 minutes once again due to rights issues. Unfortunately, this means that any insight on the returning Macra is lost. In fact, it is simply mentioned that they are in the episode before attention turns to how the creature's attack on one of the cars was filmed.

Viewers can also watch 'Gridlock' with audio commentary by Julie Gardner (Executive Producer), Travis Oliver (Milo) and Marie Jones (Visual Effects Producer) or with 5.1 surround sound. The likelihood is that this material is already on your shelf on DVD, Blu-Ray or even already in a steelbook package. However, if you are a Macra completionist then it's nice to have 'Gridlock' alongside 'The Macra Terror'.

Overall

'The Macra Terror' is a superb release. It is without question the slickest, smoothest and most accomplished animation of a missing Doctor Who adventure yet. The story is told effectively and more than delivers in recapturing the original production. Yes, there are tweaks and variations from the broadcast original, but these are entirely beneficial to the final piece presented in a new format.

Doctor Who is always at it's very best when the drama is assisted by a convincing monster. Often the show fails when the monsters fail to convince. The Myrka obviously springs to mind immediately. If we had the original episodes as transmitted the Macra might also enter that conversation. But, through animation, the Macra are unquestionably threatening and monstrous, helping to deliver a tremendous four episodes of Doctor Who. ▲



IN CONVERSATION WITH... JUSTIN JOHNSON Interview by Rik Moran

RM: Hello Justin, thanks for taking the time to speak with me today.

JJ: It's great that you're here and covering the event for the DWAS – thanks also for the copies of your magazine, which we have used as prizes to several lucky audience members!

RM: I know a little about the BFI, I visited the old Museum of Moving Images a number of times, and regularly attend the London Film Festival. Can you tell us a bit about the BFI.

JJ: yes, we are a big organisation with several large archives who look after and restore the nation's collection of film and tv, Sight and Sound Magazine, BFI Distribution, the London Film Festival, the BFI Film Fund which uses lottery money to fund new films, our venue BFI Southbank, BFI player online, BFI DVD, BFI Imax cinema, we help fund film exhibition and film making in the different regions of the UK and are responsible for leading the debate on film issues in the UK and ensuring that tv and film are in the national curriculum, part of the national debate and basically all things film and TV. Even though we are the BFI, tv is absolutely in our dna and is an essential part of our collection and in terms of dvd and in venue part of our output.

RM: What does your job at the BFI entail?

JJ: I'm the Lead Programmer for BFI Southbank so I look after the film and tv programme here whether it be the Monty Python 50th anniversary, Cary Grant or any of the other seasons and events we host here.



RM: I'm here for the screening of Mindwarp, how did the Doctor Who screenings happen? Was it a BFI or BBC idea?

JJ: Back in 2012, I really wanted us to do something different for the 50th anniversary and it just felt like the idea of doing 12 Doctors over a year with one screening event a month was the best way forward. My colleague Dick Fiddy and I worked on this together and we had good relationships with BBC in London and Cardiff and BBC Studios so spoke to them about what we wanted to do. We didn't want to do it without their buy-in and they were very keen on making this another part of the celebratory year. After the year came to an end, we had some approaches to do various classic Doctor Who related bits and pieces but I really didn't want to do anything unless we could do them as well or better than the others and didn't want to just do them for the sake of it so we left it alone for several years until the animated stories came about and that seemed like a good time to do something where there was a bit of a buzz around them and I think those conversations were initiated by BBC Studios but we were keen to work with them. For the blu ray season releases, I initially turned down the idea of doing something with them

for the reasons outlined before but when I realised how great they were going to be and how much work Russel Minton, Mark Ayres and the rest of the team were putting into them then it felt that maybe we could do something once again and as each release has been prepared, we have continued to work with BBC Studios.

RM: *How do you feel the Doctor Who screenings have worked?*

JJ: I'm really happy with them – Dick and I work quite hard in order to put them together in terms of securing guests and working with BBC Studios on their content and I really like the fact that the audiences are made up of die-hard convention going fans alongside people who love the show but have probably never publicly expressed it beyond buying a DVD and they get an afternoon of entertainment with is a bit like a mini convention for a pretty low price. I also love the fact that a lot of the audience go to the bar afterwards and seem to really enjoy meeting up with like minded folk.

RM: *What goes into selecting what story you will screen?*

JJ: It's always been something Dick and I have decided with the BBC. Sometimes it might be dependent on which guests are available or it might be which story has some special features or enhanced vfx which will look great on the big screen.

RM: *What's been a personal highlight from the screenings that have taken place thus far?*

JJ: I always like it if we can exceed expectations in terms of we have an announced guest or two that we advertise up front but then continue to look at whether there is something extra that we haven't announced whether it be Richard Harley who composed the music for Mindwarp and doesn't go to Doctor Who events joining us for a chat or unveiling the model of Kiv that Phil Newman brought to us, just those nice little extra touches if possible.

RM: *What does the future hold for Doctor Who at the BFI?*

JJ: I hope that we will continue to run with these Blu ray tie in events but there may be a point where some of them would require guests having to come back again because they were in several seasons so that might be tricky and I wouldn't want to just do them for the sake of it. But having seen what is planned at the moment, I hope we will be able to continue into 2020 with some more events. Right now, it's all hands on deck for The Curse of Fenric on 23rd November. I wonder if anyone has any monster costumes from that one!?!

RM: *Justin, thanks very much.* ▲



REVIEW: DOCTOR WHO: THE COLLECTION – SEASON 26

By Bedwyr Gullidge

handle the sound. The outer packaging of the product certainly doesn't indicate any reduction in quality. Thankfully, Season 26 won't be the swansong for The Collection as it was for the show in 1989. But what a finale it proved to be!

The Stories

Season 26 is one of the most consistently strong runs of Doctor Who ever. 'Battlefield' is often pointed to as the weakest of the season, not least by its own writer Ben Aaronovitch. It does suffer from trying to stretch a little too far. That speech by the Seventh Doctor whilst confronting Morgaine is proof enough. However, the concept of a future Doctor being Merlin in a parallel dimension, plus the Arthurian legend themes make for a great story. The Destroyer is unquestionably one of the best realised creatures in the show's history. Plus, we have a return of Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. What's not to love?

In addition to the very best version of 'Battlefield' available, with updated special effects now in high definition, the VHS version of the story is also included complete with scenes cut from the original broadcast version which viewers can also watch. That's right, there are three versions of 'Battlefield' to enjoy.

'Ghost Light' is a story which causes a lot of debate, largely due to fans trying to decipher what it is all about. The themes which Marc Platt presents are bold and inventive, all within the environment of a period ghost story that continues the development of our lead companion. It does however require quite a

Whilst the BBC was trying to kill it off during the late 1980's, Doctor Who was actually delivering some of its best material for several years. Although the production team didn't know it at the time, Season 26 would be the last full series of Doctor Who stories to be produced by the BBC until 2005. One might think that this run of four stories proving to be a swansong would suggest a deterioration in quality, so much so that the programme would be canned shortly after. On the contrary, Season 26 is Doctor Who at its very best. Thanks to the quickly developing The Collection range, we are offered an opportunity to enjoy these stories once again all showcased in another quality product.

In a time when physical media is easily dismissed in favour of the digital format, the physical boxsets produced for this range remain a delight. Lee Binding's established cover artwork layout continues with Sylvester McCoy front and centre. Whilst we didn't see much of the TARDIS interior during Season 26, due to the poor state that the set walls were in at the time, it is well captured inside the boxset and with interior menus from Gavin Rymill. Peter Crocker and SVS have once again been on picture restoration duties, whilst Mark Ayres has returned to

bit of concentration to follow it all. What may also help would be the inclusion of some of the additional material that was shot for the story but cut due to time restraints. Never fear because presented for the first time ever is a brand new workprint version of the story. This includes deleted and extended scenes and basically gives 'Ghost Light' more space to breathe. Although there is variation to the picture and sound quality, understandably so, the additional duration provided by this version of the story proves very effective. The reinsertion of brief reaction shots and whole scenes omitted due to time restrictions make a huge difference. You still might not fully understand it all by the end, but you might feel a little less breathless with the story not edited to the bone.

As with 'Battlefield' the VHS version of 'The Curse of Fenric' is also available to enjoy, along with an updated special edition and the original television broadcast episodes. Yes, that means three versions of 'The Curse of Fenric' to enjoy as well. Fortunately, it doesn't matter which edition of the story you decide to watch because Ian Briggs' classic tale is an extraordinary piece of work. Season 26's final story is similar. Such is the quality of 'Survival' that the broadcast episodes require no additions. Although separated by over 15 years, the similarities of 'Survival' and 'Rose' are uncanny. 'Survival' is particularly modern with levels of subtext open to interpretation that one might expect from Doctor Who episodes of the 21st Century.

This run of four episodes doesn't see Doctor Who bow out with a whimper. If anything, it went out in a blaze of glory. Season 26 comprises a solid run of stories with the best example of character development for a companion ever executed. Ace might be considered to be a key figure, but the driving force is still the Doctor. This season is the one which gives the Seventh incarnation his reputation for being the arch-manipulator. Even after more than 25 years the character of the Doctor continued to develop, and it still does. Season 26 stands apart in terms of quality from this particular era of Doctor

Who history and is a joy to revisit time and again.

Special Features

First thing to watch on obtaining this boxset was unquestionably *Showman: The Life of John Nathan-Turner*. This brand-new documentary covers the life, career and tragic death of Doctor Who's longest serving Producer. Newly recorded insights from friends and colleagues are combined with archive material from JNT himself, supported with some excellent camera work around BBC Television Centre and other locations. Unsurprisingly given that this is an official BBC release, the version of JNT's story presented here is far more sanitised than Richard Marson's extraordinary biography. The documentary also failed to acknowledge how devoted JNT was to his mother who passed away shortly before he did. However, *Showman* is poignant and a skilfully assembled documentary capturing the highs and lows of one individual who had a significant influence on the television programme we adore. The conclusion is brutally sombre but appropriately so.

Matthew Sweet returns as interviewer with Sophie Aldred in the seat opposite. Although some of the stories are very familiar, rarely has the telling of them been quite so detailed. For example, Aldred's relationship with JNT is discussed with more depth than may have been heard previously. Another returning feature is The Writer's Room, where the authors of the four stories in Season 26 are reunited with Script Editor Andrew Cartmel to discuss their work. They were a strong team of writers who delivered strong stories and unsurprisingly deliver a strong feature here as well.

Behind the Sofa continues once again and frustratingly the monsters in the background are once again only images rather than full props as were seen on the Season 12 boxset. Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred continue to showcase their great chemistry. There is genuine warmth between the two evident whilst they watch their work. Meanwhile,

Anneke Wills joins fellow companions Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding on the sofa to discuss the show from a companion's perspective. The two companions from earlier on in the 1980's seem to begrudge how Aldred was allowed props to work with which is rather amusing. Also watching the episodes are Joy Wilkinson and Peter McTighe, the latter shows off his knowledge having also provided the booklet notes, an item which proves vital to find which disk you need to watch what you want. Personally, I wouldn't miss the two new series writers talking about the episodes, but it does add additional variation to the perspectives.

Each story has its own documentary telling the story of how it was all put together. Notably a brand new 'making of' documentary has been made for 'The Curse of Fenric'. In addition to taking Sylvester and Sophie back to the filming locations, the duo is reunited with Tomek Bork (Capt. Sorin). Sadly, the film proves poignant as it also features Nicholas Parson who recently passed away. As is traditional commentaries, additional audio options, photo galleries, PDF production paperwork and other footage is also included. Also present is material from the DVD releases, including *Endgame* discussing

how Doctor Who came to an end, the first instalment of the *Who Peter* documentary, and a tribute to Nicholas Courtney. There is certainly plenty to keep viewers entertained for hours and hours.

Overall

As Season 26 is easily dismissed as the run of stories which brought Doctor Who to an end, it can be overlooked and left on the shelf. To do so however would be a grave error. The show did not end because of a decline in the output standards. If anything, this is Doctor Who at a peak. Not in terms of viewing figures perhaps, but in terms of storytelling. If you don't believe me, there's another version of some of the stories which you might connect with better. Throw in the hours and hours of interviews, documentaries and other bonus features and you certainly won't regret picking up this latest boxset. ▲





MODERN MONEY & DEBT SLAVERY: THE TALE OF THE SUN MAKERS, THE WIZARD OF OZ & THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS. By Simon Wellings

CORDO: Then there's the medical tax on Q-capsules, and work tax on extra hours, so I could never clear the debt. You see, the Company charges fifty percent compound interest on unpaid taxes. I'm only a grade D work unit, three talmars a shift. Three talmars. That's not enough.

LEELA: What is he saying, Doctor? I do not understand.

DOCTOR: He can't make ends meet. Probably too many economists in the government.

LEELA: These taxes, they are like sacrifices to tribal gods?

DOCTOR: Well, roughly speaking, but paying tax is more painful.

LEELA: Then the people should rise up and slaughter their oppressors!

Doctor Who: The Sun Makers Episode 1

This article will explore the themes within *Doctor Who & The Sun Makers* and the socio-economic allegory *The Wizard of Oz* in terms of how money and debt can be used as a weapon of repression. This in turn will lead us to an explanation of how modern money works and how the money creation system causes chronic problems which culminated in the recent Global Financial Crisis.

Robert Holmes' contribution to *Doctor Who* has been undeniably immense. This was the man who gave us The Master, the Sontarans, Sutekh and Sharaz Jek. He was the writer who first coined the word Gallifrey and limited Time Lord regenerations to 12.



A genius wordsmith, Holmes came up with some wonderfully exotic alien-sounding names such as Wirrn, Magnus Greel, Jethryk and Spectrox. Whilst *The Sun Makers* is not necessarily Holmes' greatest work or the most fondly remembered of his tales, I believe it has one of the most intriguing concepts. Using destructive economics and debt slavery to control a human population. And it's message is arguably more relevant today than it was back in 1977. Let us have a brief recap of the plot.

The Doctor and Leela visit Megropolis One - a future Earth colony on Pluto where a corrupt Company have an economic stranglehold on the workers by means of extreme usury and debt dependence. The second in charge, Gatherer Hade, reports to a pin-stripe suited alien from the planet Usurius called The Collector who runs the Company from his computerised wheelchair. The Doctor hacks into The Collector's computer and alters algorithms of the Company accounts, which introduce a hyperinflationary spiral, blowing the electronic economy apart. Gatherer

Hade is killed in a worker's rebellion and The Collector retreats into his wheelchair and becomes dormant.

Robert Holmes reportedly wrote the story as a protest against what he perceived as an unreasonable tax payout to the Inland Revenue and also bureaucracy within the BBC itself. This is why The Collector's personal guard are referred to as the Inner Retinue and the main exit corridor within the complex is called corridor P45. Interestingly, the story was produced at a time when inflation was running high in the UK economy and the BBC's budget had been cut. As a result, the story does look rather drab and low budget and occasionally lacks entertainment value, but it's supposed to be depicting a decaying society or dystopia, so it's not a major problem. What elevates the story for me is the witty and incisive dialogue (e.g. the obsequious Hade's superlatives about his boss, The Collector, calling him "Your enormity!" or "Your amplification!") and the underlying adult theme of the story. Louise Jameson has often cited *The Sun Makers* as her favourite story because of its subversive script. There are some great moments in the story, e.g. the rebel leader Mandrel threatens to kill The Doctor after a countdown from 10 and the Doctor doesn't buy into this bullying and engages in reverse psychology by actually increasing the countdown rate! Henry Woolfe gives a brilliant performance as The Collector, positively dripping with sadism and greed. It is worth noting that many interpretations are possible with *The Sunmakers*. It is possible to interpret the story as an attack not only on parasitic free market capitalism but on totalitarian communism as well where everyone is allegedly equal but some are more equal than others. It is also worth noting that corporate greed and extreme capitalism also featured in another Doctor Who story by Robert Holmes - the outstanding *Caves of Androzani*. Both of these stories portray a plutocracy - rule by the super rich - and the impact that has on ordinary people. I suspect Bob Holmes was more left of centre than right of centre but who knows for sure?

Back on planet Earth, economics has been used in the past as a weapon. In fact in America in the 1890s, banks and big business could alter the supply of gold in the economy and bring about recessions at will. Farmers and industrialists would be unable to repay their loans and mortgages and banks could seize their properties at pennies on the dollar. This situation gave rise to the Free Silver movement, who wanted money to be based on silver as well as gold, to weaken the grip of the banks and big business. Indeed the demonetisation of silver in 1873 was hugely unpopular with the masses and gave rise to the Greenback party who wanted money creation to be carried out by government interest-free (like Lincoln did with his Greenback currency in the 1860s) rather than leave it to the private banks who would print and lend the money at extortionate rates of interest. The economic downturn in the US in the 1890s was probably an allegorical backdrop for L. Frank Baum's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1900 - a warning flare sent out into the night of history.



Here's the theory. In Baum's book, Dorothy wears silver slippers (they were changed to ruby slippers for the 1939 film for technicolor reasons). She is transported to the land of Oz - gold and silver were measured in ounces (an abbreviation for which is Oz). The Wicked Witch of the West and the Witch of the East (East coast and mid-West banking and business interests?) want to seize the silver slippers but Dorothy remains safe whilst she wears them on the yellow brick road, which represents the Gold Standard of currency, perhaps? Dorothy marches

with her dog Toto (the Teetotal movement marched regularly alongside the Free Silver movement in the 1890s) and a Scarecrow (who represents the farmers – if only he had the brains to figure out why he lost his property?) and a Tin Man (who represents the industrialists who have seized up due to lack of liquidity?). Together they march to Emerald City (Washington DC with the Greenback currency) to see the Wizard of Oz (the President of the United States) who they believe to be very powerful but who is really an ordinary man hiding behind a curtain. On the way there, they meet up with a cowardly lion, who represents the politicians - more specifically William Jennings Bryan who was referred to as the “Lion of the Free Silver movement” until he U-turned for political reasons. Whilst in Emerald City, Dorothy walks along 7 corridors and goes up 3 flights of stairs. 7 then 3. Could this be a reference to the Silver Coinage Act of '73 when silver was demonetised? The Wicked Witch of the West is destroyed by a bucket of water (lots of liquidity?) and Dorothy gets back to the normality of Kansas again. There are other parallels too. I'm not sure if you're sold on the theory of The Wizard of Ounces yet? It could all be nonsense of course. Humans have a tendency to see patterns that aren't there. But on this occasion, I think there are too many coincidences pertinent to the time it was written.

So where does this leave us with modern money? When people think of money, they think of notes and coins or a tangible means of exchange. Surprisingly, in the UK, less than 3% of our money supply is cash (notes and coins). Over 97% of our money is digital money numbers on private bank's computers. There isn't anything wrong



with this necessarily but I find the origin of these money numbers worrying. If you ask someone on the street where does money come from, they would probably answer that it's the Bank of England that produces it. Well the Bank of England produces the tangible notes and coins and private banks swap this for their money numbers so they can fill up their ATMs. But what's the origin of the other 97% - the money numbers?



The surprising answer is that private banks create the money numbers effectively out of nothing (based on other people's promises to pay) whenever they extend credit - which they call “making a loan”, although they are not loaning anything that was there before. Money and interest-bearing debt are inseparable birth twins. Money is borrowed into existence, conjured up on a computer screen whenever someone wants to borrow some money during a “loan event”. This explains the source of the bank's profits. It also explains why banks have the largest buildings in most major cities. I didn't believe this claim at first until I looked into it. Then I looked at what the Bank of England and some prominent economists were saying.

“...by far the largest role in creating broad [digital] money is played by the banking sector...When banks make loans they *create additional deposits* for those that have borrowed the money...The *money-creating sector* in the United Kingdom consists of resident banks (including the Bank of England) and building societies...”

BoE, Quarterly Bulletin 2007 Q3

And if this isn't enough to convince you, here is what Martin Wolf (Chief Economics Editor of The Financial Times) has to say

“The essence of the contemporary monetary system is the creation of money, out of nothing, by private banks' often foolish lending.”

FT Article - 9th November 2010

And finally, a quote from Lord Adair Turner, former Chairman of the Financial Services Authority (FSA)

“The financial crisis of 2007/08 occurred because we failed to constrain the private financial system's creation of private credit and money.”

Speech to South African Reserve Bank, 2nd November 2012

There are numerous other admissions from honourable gentlemen. By the way, these quotes are not taken out of context. “Creation” means *ex nihilo* – i.e. from nothing. One moment the money wasn't there. The next moment it was. All a bank needs is a banking license, a small amount of capital at the Central Bank (e.g. the Bank of England) and agreed accounting rules supervised by the FSA. When a bank loan is made with a loan contract, the assets and liabilities increase in tandem on the accounting balance sheet by the same amount. This expansion of the balance sheet is seen as being normal by the FSA because the balance sheet balances. They are only concerned about an imbalance.

In my job, I occasionally use mathematics. My numbers are just as good as the bank's numbers. Why am I forced into using their numbers? If it sounds like a scam, then you'd be right. Although I think the word “conspiracy” is too strong to describe the situation. So what on earth is going on?

In 1844, Sir Robert Peel, a Conservative Prime Minister, produced the Bank Charter Act, which forbade private banks from

issuing currency as notes and coins. Only the Bank of England was allowed to do that. However, even though this Law is still valid and has never been repealed, it says nothing about digital money and so private banks have been able to circumvent it, so that now British pound sterling does not belong to the British people. It has been privatised and belongs to a banking elite. Ordinary citizens have to borrow it in order to use it. At interest. We have a “rent-a-currency” and have to pay a background rent as interest on any money we need. If banks don't “lend”, there is no money.

If you have a mortgage debt, then congratulations – you have just increased the nation's money supply! In addition to debt creation, there is interest to pay on the principal “loan”. Not all interest is recycled back into the economy – new loans need to be larger than old loans in order to find the interest needed to pay off the original loan. This in turn forces an increase in the money supply which can never catch up with the debt. The result is that the real economy and ordinary people are permanently indebted to the financial sector. Most people assume that our money is permanently circulating tokens. However, 97% of our money supply is temporary and is extinguished when the debt it has been chasing is paid off. The current debt-money system ensures that everyone is in artificial competition with everyone else to get out of debt. However, someone has to hold the debt because we can't all get out of debt. This is a profound thought.

When writing *The Sun Makers*, Robert Holmes intuitively understood that money did not need to be physical cash but could easily be electronic numbers on a computer screen. The Doctor's plan of blowing the economy apart by introducing some clever inflationary maths into the equation is nothing short of ingenious! Holmes also understood that debt is a claim on future human labour. And that an excessive debt is an excessive claim on that labour, with all the stress and anxiety that comes with that. Debt slavery.

Our own money system seems to be as fragile as *The Collector's*. In the credit crunch of 2008, the total money supply of our country was £2.2 Trillion. The debt owed to the banks was £2.6 Trillion. So if we paid off as much of our debts as possible and ended up with no money, we would still "owe" the banks £400 billion pounds!



This fact alone should alert anyone to the fact that there is something seriously wrong with our monetary system and that much of the debt that we "owe" isn't real and the net financial wealth of the country is actually negative. Under the existing system, if we want more money we have to take on more debt. If we want to reduce our debts, we have to make do with less money. It's a Catch 22. And it's inherent in the system. An unstable debt-money system. I'm not suggesting a conspiracy, although there will be some vested interests by people in the know. Like any complex system or organisation that's grown organically, the main problem is ignorance and incompetence.

So unlike *The Sun Makers*, there's probably no conspiracy or evil masterplan. And unlike *The Sun Makers*, the western economy didn't need interference from the Doctor's hacking – it blew itself apart, as people began to default on their loans. We now have a stagnant global economy. At the heart of the problem is a four-letter word – DEBT. And it's not even a genuine debt that we really owe. It's an unnecessary consumptive debt not a healthy self-liquidating debt. And don't even get me started on Payday Loans companies with their ridiculous 5,000% APR interest rates.

When a profession fails to deliver it causes problems. When that profession happens to

be the study and practice of economics, the whole world suffers. We have been forever plagued by economic woes - even during comparatively good times. We appear to have grown used to unemployment, poverty, inequality, attacks on pensions and inflation (a stealth tax on money itself). Now we have additional problems such as the continuing Eurozone crisis, pay freezes, strikes, civil unrest and flatlining growth.

In 2008, the banking sector suffered a massive heart attack. Governments across the world were forced into bailing them out. Losses were socialised as austerity and pay freezes. So basically, it was supportive socialism for the banks and harsh capitalism for everyone else. Nice. And it's not just about falling living standards in the western world. The World Health Organisation estimated that the Global Financial Crisis threw 100 million people worldwide into poverty. At a typical 10% mortality rate for people in poverty, this implies that the economic crisis killed 10 million people. I find this appalling whether or not the crisis was deliberately orchestrated or inadvertent.

I am not advocating an alternative money system in this article. I am simply suggesting that given what humanity is capable of, is this really the best way of organising our one and only means of exchange? What kind of a world do we want to live in? One based on indebtedness and contrived scarcity or one based on prosperity and abundance?



I have little trust in politicians or mainstream economists. What we need is the greatest Time Lord of them all to sort out this epic mess. Where's the Fourth Doctor when you need him? ▲



SERIES 12 REVIEWED by Pip Madeley

SKYFALL

Dr Who and her mates are roped in to help Stephen Fry spy on Lenny Henry who is up to no good with the Kasabians so Dr Who goes to get help from a mate from Australia and takes them all to Lenny Henry's birthday party where it kicks off big time and there's an argument and a motorcycle chase with guns and a private jet and then the Australian guy says "actually I'm not Australian, I'm the Master in disguise, GOTCHA!"

9/10

SKYFALL: PART DEUX

Dr Who and her mates Linda Lovelace and Michelle from the French Resistance manage to foil The Master/Lenny Henry/Kasabian plan to use humanity as hard drives whilst Ryan, Yaz and Graham sit down and have a chat (oh, and Gallifrey's been destroyed again)

9/10

MAMBO NO. 5

Dr Who and her mates are busy mopping up alien squid mess in the TARDIS when Graham surprises them with a free holiday he got from a space newspaper and to be honest I lost track after that cos my brain couldn't shake the image of Bradley Walsh in Speedos

9/10



DR. TESLA'S HOUSE OF HORRIBLE

Dr Who and her mates land in a historical episode and meet the guy that invented the electric car and his more successful rival who invented lightbulbs, electric pens, answering machines, photocopiers, cinemas, the iPod and email

9/10

RETURN OF THE JUDOON

Dr Who and her mates track a platoon of Judoon to Gloucester one afternoon (well you try and get morning to rhyme) and meet a tour guide who turns out to be a fugitive who turns out to be an old Dr Who, but not just any old Dr Who, an old female Dr Who that the current female Dr Who doesn't remember... and John Barrowman's in it

9/10



PRAXEUS

Dr Who and her mates are on present day Earth investigating a deadly new virus that isn't the coronavirus with extra help from an ex-copper, an astronaut, a YouTuber and a couple of scientists in Madagascar and after explaining the plot Dr Who uses the TARDIS to create an antidote to spray onto the Earth and two guys have a kiss and a cuddle

9/10

CAN YOU HEAR ME? CAN YOU HEAR ME RUNNING

Dr Who runs her mates home before checking out Syria in olden times but her mates all have really weird dreams so Dr Who comes back to solve the plot of the episode and says "Tune in next week cos Mary Shelley is gonna be in it"

9/10

THE HAUNTING OF ASTON VILLA

Dr Who and her mates gatecrash a house party to watch Mary Shelley write Frankenstein but the house starts messing them about and then that Lonely Cyberman that John Barrowman warned us about shows up looking for the Cyberium which looks a bit like that liquid silver stuff from Terminator 2 and Dr Who says "No you can't have it" but Aswad the Lonely Cyberman threatens to destroy Earth so Dr Who says "Alright then you can have it"

9/10



ELEVATION OF THE CYBERMEN

Dr Who and her mates follow Aswad the Lonely Cyberman to the far future to foil his evil plan and save what's left of humanity but things go tits up and Yaz and Graham end up on a massive spaceship full of Cybermen whilst Dr Who and Ryan visit Ko Sharmus which everyone thinks is a planet at the end of the universe but actually turns out to be an old bloke from Game Of Thrones and then The Master shows up and says hey

9/10



THE TIMELESS CHILDREN

Dr Who enters the Matrix on Gallifrey where The Master explains all about the Timeless Child and Tecteun and Shobogans and The Division and what that was all about with the Irish policeman last week and to be honest I lost track after that cos I still couldn't shake the image of Bradley Walsh in Speedos



9/10



PROJECT INVASION II

SATURDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 12-6PM

THE DALEKS GATHER IN LONDON FOR A FUN-FILLED PHOTOSHOOT AT
PETER'S HILL OUTSIDE ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL. BRING YOUR COSTUMES!
BRING YOUR CAMERAS! IT'S GOING TO BE OUT OF THIS WORLD!

