

COSMIC



MASQUE





EDITORIAL

by Rik Moran

Welcome to issue VII of Cosmic Masque. Yes it's hot on the heels of issue VI—kind of like the old saying about buses, you wait ages for one and then two come along right after each other. This gets Cosmic Masque onto its new schedule, with three issues throughout 2019, in March, June and September, with the Annual due December/January. Celestial Toyroom continues monthly of course.

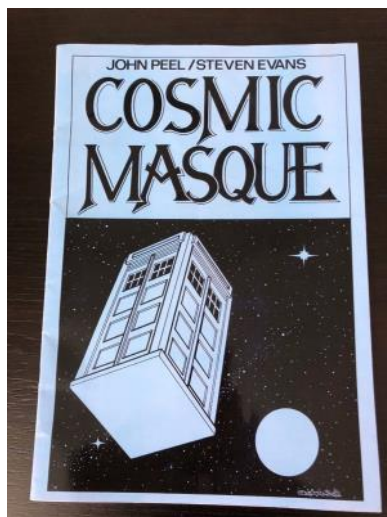
Inside this issue we have a nice selection of reviews and fiction not to mention an exclusive interview with Re-Generation Who convention organiser Oni Durrant. The cover is a excellent piece of artwork by Marshall Tankersley. If you get the chance to check out his stuff, please do. I'm very grateful for the pieces he has submitted to us here at DWAS.

If there's anything you'd like to send in, whether it be artwork, fiction or feedback you can get in touch by email to: cm@dwasonline.co.uk or even by post. We love hearing from you.

Grant and Ian have got to have a little break for this issue, lucky fellas! Hopefully they don't mind me hijacking their publication for a bit.

Enjoy this issue.

Rik



COSMIC MASQUE 1 1977

Our facsimile of the original Cosmic Masque from 1977 is available to buy from our eBay site—[click here to view](#)

COSMIC MASQUE - VII

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Doctor Who Appreciation Society

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REVIEW

7TH DOCTOR #1

Review by Rik Moran

Titan Comics:

Doctor Who: The Seventh Doctor

Titan Comics' line of Doctor Who books have so far done an excellent job of capturing the essence of the era of Doctor Who that they are representing and 'Doctor Who: The Seventh Doctor' issue one is no exception.

Andrew Cartmel (Doctor Who Script Editor 1987-1989) delivers an excellent script which captures the characters superbly. The artwork by Christopher Jones and Marco Lesko is gorgeous, stunning and beautiful and deserves to be in a gallery.

This story takes place following the Big Finish 'Lost Stories' series and has a little 'previously' section at the beginning, to provide a catch-up. However it's not essential that you've listened to them in order to enjoy the comic.

The Counter-Measures team from Remembrance of the Daleks make a return as supporting characters. It's good to see them again and observe how they now interact with Ace and the Doctor.

Fans of Sylvester McCoy's Doctor will revel in this story and be taken back to this enjoyable period of the show's history.

There are four variants of issue one to collect, with covers by Alice X Zhang, Will Brooks, Christopher Jones and Simon Myers.

Some will pick up the cover that they particularly like, others will collect all four. As for me, I'm just waiting for issue two. I need to know what happens next!



[Visit Titan and see the Doctor Who range by clicking here](#)

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REVIEW

13TH DOCTOR #1

Review by Rik Moran

Titan Comics:

Doctor Who: The Thirteenth Doctor

I am a big fan of art and comics so I'm always cautious when I'm going to review a comic book as I am very critical.

However following my initial read of issue 1 of The Thirteenth Doctor issue 1, I was impressed and thought I'd have a quick gander at reviews elsewhere. [Blogtor Who](#) said:

"What makes this first issue really shine is the seamless translation of the Doctor, Yaz, Ryan, and Graham from screen to page. Rachael Stott and Enrica Eren Angiolini's artwork, in conjunction with Jody Houser's writing, perfectly capture each of these characters' likenesses and mannerisms. Every panel in this issue is breathtaking, thanks to Angiolini's vibrant colours and Stott's incredible attention to detail. The talent of this creative team shines through particularly strongly in their rendering of the new TARDIS control room. Somehow it appears even more beautiful and ethereal than it does on screen. We see that the new console features a twenty-sided die, which more geeky readers such as myself will recognise as being used in games of Dungeons and Dragons. It's a small detail that brilliantly captures the Thirteenth Doctor's wonderful nerdiness."

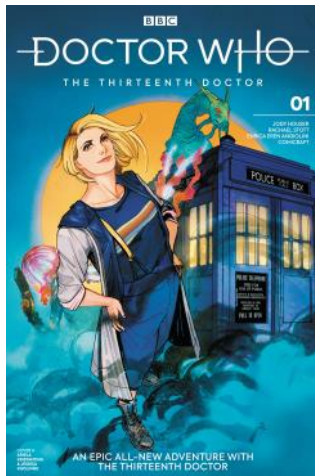
I'm quoting this because I completely

concur and couldn't have said it better myself. The issue is absolutely gorgeous. My only negative is that the main cover isn't to my liking, and jars with the rest of the issue. Having said that this issue has 13 variant covers to choose from so if like me, the main one isn't to your liking, choose another. I've gone with Rachel Stott's cover, as I am totally in love with her artwork.

If you're a Doctor Who fan who has never read the comics, this is the perfect time to start. If you're a comic book fan who never got into Doctor Who, this book will smoothly guide you into one of the greatest fictional universes in existence. Either way, this is one book newcomers and old fans alike are sure to enjoy.

The Thirteenth Doctor comics are off to a great start, I look forward to these continuing adventures.







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REVIEW 2017 COIN Review by Rik Moran

This coin is the first official collectible Doctor Who coin. Produced by the New Zealand Mint, it celebrates series 10, the Twelfth Doctor, and key characters from the 2017 series: Bill, Missy, the Master, Nardole and the Cybermen.

The coin is presented in a modern, stylish case which incorporates images of the TARDIS. The matching, numbered Certificate of Authenticity is inside—10, 000 have been produced worldwide.

Holding this box in my hand, it is a wonderful creation and beautifully displayed. You can remove the coin and certificate if you wish. It is in a protec-

tive plastic case to avoid scratches and dust etc.

The certificates are numbered so you know where in the chain your coin is.

If the NZ Mint continues with these, I hope they can live up to the standard set here.

[To buy in the UK click here.](#)

[To buy in New Zealand and world-wide, click here.](#)



FICTION
BE A DOCTOR
by Kate Coleman

The Doctor of War stumbled through the Gallifreyan desert towards the TARDIS. In the final few steps his legs threatened to fail him altogether, and he flung his arm towards the blue box to steady himself. *Home*. After endless war, horror, and destruction, he was finally home. The back of his throat clenched painfully tight, and, bent almost double, he vomited into the sand.

No more. The Time War was over.

He dragged his sleeve across his mouth, but nothing could wipe away the acrid taste of this bitter victory. A deep ache burned in his chest as he pushed the door open. The coolness of the console room should have been a comfort after the relentless heat, but there was no comfort for him. Not today, not ever. He'd used the Moment to stop the most destructive war in all creation: Time Lords against Daleks. And he'd killed every last man, woman and child on Gallifrey to do it.

He sank to his knees on the console room floor. He deserved nothing but damnation, burning forever in this box, alone. His chest was dull and heavy, as if a metal fist had cracked his ribs open and was squeezing on what remained of his hearts.

Could he die of broken hearts? The last of the Time Lords sank to the floor and resolved to find out.

The TARDIS, contrary and unreliable as she often was, saw her thief in pain,

and snatched him away from the last seconds of Gallifrey into the space-time vortex.

As the Doctor stared at the console room ceiling, he still heard the screams. Fire. Cities shrouded in smoke. Civilisations torn. Planets splintered, death and destruction raging through time and space. He forced his eyes shut to block out the nightmare visions, but there was no escape. *Will it never end?*

Time passed in disjointed chunks as he slept or slipped into unconsciousness, and then stretched out to fill eons as he stared into the void. Eventually, his body demanded attention. Water, food, care. He shut himself down and refused to open his eyes. The pain barely faded. The screams would not stop.

"No more!" He flung his hands over his ears as he lay feverish on the floor of his ship.

After an indeterminable amount of time his body was so weakened that he thought—even wished—death would take him. More than anything he wanted oblivion, not the great cheat of the Time Lords, starting over again in a burst of golden light.

Even as his hearts longed for eternal silence, he was jerked to his feet like a marionette, power crackling through nerve endings, torrents of chemicals raging through his veins.

He fought. "No! Let me go," he implored the universe. But, deep down, he understood. The universe had plans for him yet. The heat started in his fingertips, and then crawled up his arms. This was his punishment. The not-girl

with the name of a flower had told him so. He was doomed to live, and hear the screams of Gallifrey's children over and over.

Every cell in his body exploded, a billion tiny supernovae, the purging gold light nailing him to an invisible cross, building inexorably towards the primordial reshuffle. No escape for him into the cold, sweet darkness of death. His fate was rebirth.

The golden aura faded. The new man, alert, angry, tore off the brown leather jacket and flung it to the floor. He dashed to the dressing room, grabbed the first things he laid his hands on, a black leather jacket and dark trousers, and scrambled into them. Without even glancing in the mirror, he returned to the console room and blindly punched in coordinates with one thought in mind. He had to make the screams stop.

It was a fine irony that the TARDIS had brought him to a planet full of happy families, an intergalactic theme park, no less. Perhaps in some kind of bizarre way his time ship had reasoned that the squeals of happy children on fairground rides would make him feel better. It didn't. He stood it for as long as he could by keeping his head down and walking. Then he passed the rollercoaster—the biggest on this side of the Oshara Nebulae. He wanted to fling his hands over his ears to blot out those screams. He cursed under his breath. This was making things worse, not better. Up ahead was a bar, with mercifully few customers at this time of

the day. He found himself striding towards it. Maybe he could at least get some peace and quiet.

"How may I serve you?" The Ood serving behind the bar flung a tea towel over their shoulder as they spoke in a soft, almost lyrical voice.

The Time Lord pulled himself into a barstool and looked uncertainly at the Ood, who drew a bottle out from under the bar. "It is my experience that there's no day that cannot be made a little easier by a glass of vermillion brandy." The bar tender poured the bright red liquid into a glass, leaving a curl of steam rising delicately from the bottle's top.

He eyed the glass. He'd never turned to drink to drown his sorrows before, not once. But, came a small voice at the back of his mind, you've never wiped out your own civilisation before, either. For the first time in a lifetime there was no one depending on him, no war to fight, no planets to save. No one to answer to but himself. He was alone, and it was probably better that way. He picked up the glass and took a deep swig of the fiery drink.

A woman, wearing deep red robes and the thinnest of smiles, heaved herself onto a barstool beside him. She stared with suspicious eyes, as if to assure herself this man really was who she believed him to be. Then she nodded.

"So, it is done."

"Go away, Ohila."

"Hmmm." She looked at his almost-empty glass. "Running away again?"

"Nope. Not running. Staying firmly in this seat. Trying to drink in peace."

"Hiding in a bottle is still running away."

"Is it? Well, maybe I am." He raised his glass with a sardonic smile. "Cheers." He gulped the drink in one, slammed the glass on the bar, and waved at the bartender. "Another."

"It's not over," Ohila said.

"I think it is. I was there," he shot back. He raised his finger over the bar counter, and mimicked a downward press. "I pressed the button."

"I mean your *life*."

"That's a matter of opinion." He turned sharply on Ohila, but she didn't flinch. "I'm sick of your meddling. You should have left me dead after that crash, but no, you and your bloody elixir had to bring me back. And turn me into *him*." For a moment, he was back in the cave on Karn, the exquisite unrending of his DNA, wrenching him back to life, worse than regeneration and his first glimpse at the Untempered Schism rolled into one. He flicked his fingers at Ohila. "Clear off."

Ohila narrowed her eyes, but said nothing. She placed a black leather wallet on the bar and slid it at him. He ignored it. "Why are you really here?"

"To deliver a gift from the Sisterhood." She inched the leather wallet further toward him. He shoved it directly back. Nothing could atone for what he'd done and no gift could erase the Sisterhood's role in it. At the back of his mind, he knew he was being unfair. The Sisterhood knew what had to be done and they did it. The universe didn't need a doctor. It needed a warrior.

Maybe one day he'd forgive them. But not today.

"I only want one thing, Ohila. One small thing from the universe; and after what I've been through is that really so much to ask?"

"And what is that?"

"To be left alone." He turned away, took another long swig from his glass, and stared at the row of bottles behind the counter. If he started at one end, he could probably take a shot from each one and then stagger back to the TARDIS and sleep for a month.

If that was running away, then so be it.

Clara Oswald frowned at the console as she laid in coordinates for the second most beautiful garden in the galaxy. She'd have to be careful to arrive *before* the time she got banned, of course, and the Diner-TARDIS taking her where she actually wanted to go was more a matter of luck than a reflection of her hastily gleaned piloting skills.

She'd just left Me at a spa planet in the Terrelion cluster after another row.

It had started innocently enough, with Me joking, "You're not stalking him again, are you?"

It was hard for Clara to see the funny side, when her heart felt like it was breaking. She tried to pretend she didn't, but she missed the Doctor.

"I'm not stalking him! I just worry about him being on his own, that's all. I like to know where he is. There's no harm in it."

Me wouldn't let it drop. "You'll risk the safety of the whole universe, just be-

cause you miss your friend? For God's sake, Clara, we have a TARDIS. We can go anywhere, do anything. You can't keep doing this!"

So they had agreed to cool off separately. Clara planned to go back to the second most beautiful garden in the universe for a contemplative walk and consider how she wanted to spend her life. It was just so hard to let the Doctor go.

The console made a chirping, twittering noise.

"This isn't where I wanted to go," Clara said, double checking the coordinates. "What are you up to?" A series of repeated frequencies played out over the com panel, sounding like space-static. "What's that?" It was no use expecting an answer. She'd have to take a look around to find out.

She stepped out into a galactic theme park. Screaming children whizzed down brightly coloured slopes on giant hovering doughnut rings. A big wheel filled the skyline, and a host of alien races—some she recognised, some she didn't—surrounded her in a throng of happy families.

She decided to stay for a while, watched the anti-grav bike display, wandered through the monster zone, and took a ride on the biggest roller coaster she'd ever seen. But with no adrenaline in her system there was no thrill. Sometimes the chronolock felt like a punishment, holding her flat in a steady state.

After the rollercoaster she decided to find somewhere to sit and try to fathom out why the Diner had brought her

here. She spotted a bar. No point drinking, of course, as her body would reset in an instant. But at least she might find company.

She jolted to a halt a few feet from the bar's door. There it was, clear as day. That magic blue box, his TARDIS, parked between a rubbish bin and a wall.

"Oh my god." She considered turning away. That would probably be the right thing to do. But her feet were fixed to the floor. More than that, they were taking her toward the TARDIS.

Tentatively, she pressed her fingers to the outer shell. It tingled just the way she remembered. She rubbed the TARDIS key she still wore on a chain around her neck between her thumb and forefinger. "Hello, dear," she said quietly. "I'd better not stay."

In response, the door opened.

"Oh." Clara knew she shouldn't, but who could resist? Not Clara Oswald. She stepped inside and gasped. The layout was different than she'd ever seen it. Darker, and the console still had tiny drifts of steam wafting from the panels, as if it had only recently changed.

A tightness pulled at the back of her neck, as realisation hit her. If the TARDIS had changed, that meant he had, too. Her hand flew to her heart. Did that mean he was gone? Her knees trembled. She rarely cried these days. Perhaps the emotional numbness of her chronolocked state prevented tears. Maybe it was that she'd already cried an ocean, and there were no tears left to spill. But, hot tears threat-

ened her now. She always imagined she'd see the Doctor one last time, and to find him now, moments too late, well that was too cruel.

Then, she saw the sand scattered on the floor, and the brown leather jacket with a sonic screwdriver tucked in between the folds. She picked it up. It wasn't *his*, but she'd seen it before; in a prison cell under the Tower of London. A smile played on the corner of her lips, hope lifting her heart, her feet breaking into a dash of their own accord as she rushed to the console and checked the most recent coordinates. Yes! He'd just come from Gallifrey. The day the Time War ended. This wasn't her Doctor's TARDIS, and he wasn't her Doctor yet. So there was still time, still a chance that she would see her silver haired Doctor again. She let that thought dance through her for a moment, as she clutched the sonic screwdriver close to her chest, until an insistent bleep started up on the console. Intrigued, Clara checked its source. It was the same irregular sub-space signal that had brought her here. Something was wrong on this planet. Wrong enough for two TARDISes to show up. Slowly, Clara realised something else. The Doctor had just been through unimaginable horror. Ending the Time War but destroying his own people. And he'd done it alone. This Doctor needed a friend more than ever.

Without a clear plan, in fact with very little thought at all, Clara dashed out of the TARDIS. Would she even recognise him? Of all his lives, she'd echoed least with his ninth. All she had were

fleeting images, a maelstrom of memories from her dizzying moments in his time stream, blurred at the edge of her senses.

Clara paused in the bar's doorway, eyes flitting around the room: a serving Ood behind the bar, a blue-skinned Telorian trader finishing up a green and yellow cocktail, a curl of smoke hanging above the empty glass, and there he was, slumped on a barstool, wearing a black leather jacket and blue, blue eyes. It might have been the afternoon sun streaming through the window, but it seemed there was a blush of gold on his cheekbones.

"Doctor," she whispered.

He swilled a glass of something in his hand. His blue eyes were bleak, distant, raw pain rippling beneath his skin. He might have left his old coat crumpled on the TARDIS floor, but the shadow of war still clung to him. He had the look of a man blotting out a million screams.

Clara steeled herself and walked over to him. With the most casual tone she could muster, she indicated the empty stool beside him. "Is this seat taken?"

"Yes."

Clara sat down anyway.

He glanced at her. "Do I know you?" he asked, slurring his words and swaying on the barstool.

It took a moment for Clara to realise he was drunk. Her eyes widened slightly. This was new. Clara had seen the Time Lord's fury shake civilisations, and she'd seen him weep, kissing her hand on the Trap Street and begging her to stay. She'd seen him joyful, with

the full flush of adventure coursing through his veins, and she'd seen him bored stiff by some minor detail he didn't care about. Clara had seen him regal in a red velvet jacket and naked as the day he was born.

But she'd never, ever imagined seeing him off-the-wall *drunk*.

He squinted at her. "You look human, except for the frankly disturbing lack of bodily functions."

Clara opened her mouth, with no idea what to say. Most people were at least *polite* when they noticed, as Me put it, her *difference*.

He laughed. "How'd that happen then?" He paused, and then turned back to his drink. "Do you know what? I don't want to know."

Clara smiled stiffly. His casual indifference stung. She stuck out her hand anyway. "I'm..." then she paused. She hadn't thought that through either. She could hardly introduce herself as Clara Oswald. In the end, she settled on the first name that came to mind. "I'm Dinah. You got a name?"

"Nope," he said without turning his head.

Clara picked up the psychic paper from the bar in front of him. "Says here you're the Doctor. Advice and assistance obtainable immediately."

He snatched it from her, and squinted at it blearily. "What is that anyway?"

"Psychic paper," Clara said. Didn't he know? He'd never told her where he got it. She just assumed he'd always had it, but now he stared at it as if he'd never seen it before. He shoved it away in disgust. It fell to the floor.

"You're going to rely on that, one day," she chided him.

He snorted. "I've managed nine hundred years without it. Can't see me needing it now."

"You'd be surprised," she said. She jumped off the barstool, scooped it up and slipped it into the pocket of his leather jacket.

"Look, what do you want?" he said, irritably. "In case you haven't noticed, I'm in a long-term relationship with this barstool."

Clara straightened her shoulders. "There's something wrong here. Can't you feel it?" She leaned in toward him, conspiratorially. He never could resist a mystery, and perhaps this would shake him to his senses. "There's an odd signal bouncing about on sub-space frequencies. My . . . my ship picked it up." His TARDIS did too, that must be why he'd ended up here, but in the Doctor's current state, it was anyone's guess if he'd noticed.

"Oh, a strange signal," he said. For a moment Clara's heart lifted. Then he picked up his glass and took another swig. "Not interested."

Clara tried to reign in her annoyance. He believed he'd just destroyed his entire race. He was entitled to feel sorry for himself. She put a hand on his arm, wishing she could tell him that one day everything would change; that when he wasn't faced with that terrible burden alone, he would make a better choice. But that was in his future. He had a lot to live through before he got there.

In all the time they travelled together,

he never once mentioned meeting her in a bar, but given his current state of inebriation, a lapse in memory wasn't altogether surprising.

"I can see you're not in a good place right now," she said, careful not to reveal she knew too much. "But hiding in a bottle's not the answer."

"Seems like the perfect answer to me," he said, grinning stupidly.

Clara wasn't fooled, not for a minute, but she needed an angle. She let her eyes wander around the room. They landed on an info-screen on a wall behind the Doctor. Her gaze fixed on the image with growing horror. A scene of mass panic unfolding in the theme park. People screaming and running. She leaned over the bar and asked the bartender to turn up the volume.

"Reports are coming in of unusual activity in Madrigil City's Adventure Zone. We have unsubstantiated claims of..." the newscaster paused, as if she had problems believing the story being piped to her, "um, the attractions coming to life."

"Look!" Clara exclaimed. "I told you!" She jabbed a finger at the screen. Surely this would break the Doctor's dour mood. "People might die!"

His next words turned Clara cold. "People die all the time," he said, turning his face away, as if he cared not one single jot for the scene of terror unfolding on the screen.

Survivor's guilt was one thing, but this callousness was something else. Clara wanted to slap him, to jolt him to his senses. In that moment, she had never missed her Doctor so much. She forced her words to stay calm, her tone even.

"Look, I know you're hurting. But you don't just give up."

He turned on her angrily. "You know nothing about me. Believe me, you don't want to."

Clara felt the universe shift, as if some deep wrongness had seeped into this version of reality. This wasn't how the Doctor was supposed to behave. "Doctor, please. This isn't you," she pleaded. "You can't be like this!"

The darkness in his eyes made her take an involuntary step back.

"I don't know what you think you know about me. I don't even care. *This* is who I am now." He leaned toward her, lowering his voice, measuring his words with a terrible finality. "Leave. Me. Alone."

Clara took another step back toward the door, her head spinning, not wanting to believe this was the man she'd known. "Well I'm not going to sit by and watch this happen!" she said, furious and choked at the same time.

"Do what you like, small human," she heard him mutter. Ears ringing, she turned and ran back towards the park.

The Doctor watched the woman go, with her too large eyes and too few life signs. Was this who he was now? The man who didn't care? The man who sat back and got drunk while people panicked in the park right next to him? How much lower was there for him to go? He didn't know anymore. He closed his eyes, pressed his hands to his temples, and wished the screams would stop.

Clara pushed her way blindly through

the crowds toward the Adventure Zone. All around, people were running, shouting, some clutching children, some splattered in deep, rich, purple blood. All were terrified. She ran through options in her head. First, she needed to find the source of the signal—

Clara stumbled to a stop, to avoid knocking down a small girl who stood, crying, in her way. She was about four or five, with delicate green skin and elfin-pointed ears. Clara bobbed down as people continued to shove and buffet them. This child was in danger of being swept away in the crowd. “What’s your name?” Clara shouted.

“Aerial.”

“I’m Dinah,” Clara said. “I’m a bit lost. Are you lost too, Aerial?”

“Yes,” the girl whimpered.

Clara could barely hear her. Men, grown men, buffeted past them in a panicked run. Clara caught the girl’s hand, as much to stop herself being knocked off her feet as anything. Aerial clutched at Clara’s hand tightly, sniffing unhappily, anchoring herself to the first friendly grown-up she found, as a sea of people swarmed around them.

“Shall we get out of this crowd?” The girl nodded again and let Clara guide her away from the desperate press of people to a quieter spot by a candy floss stand.

“Do you know where your parents are?”

Aerial shook her head.

Clara looked around at the scattered debris; knocked over bins, abandoned bags. No security guards or police that she could see. No one to help. And if

she knew the sort of trouble that would entice a TARDIS, then the police or army were probably out of their depth. How *could* he do nothing? *Her* Doctor would never sit and watch this happen, no matter how angry or lost he felt. In the face of impossible odds, he fought *harder*. Clara shivered, remembering the trap street, and how he’d kissed her hand so tenderly.

She looked down at Aerial, and remembered her own words that day. “*Your reign of terror will end with sight of the first crying child and you know it.*”

Clara crouched down to meet the little girl’s haunted eyes. This child had seen something terrible; she felt sure of it.

“I think my friend can help. He’s a doctor. He’s *the* Doctor, and he’s a good man. The trouble is he’s really sad right now and I think he’s forgotten about being the Doctor. Could you tell *him* what happened to you? It might help him remember who he is. And then he’ll help us.” Clara hoped it would turn out to be true.

The crowds were thinning now as people streamed to the exits and out of the park, but Clara guided Aerial against the flow, back towards the bar. The Doctor hadn’t moved. He stared directly at the bottles at the back of the bar, the empty glass still in front of him.

Clara marched up to him. “Aerial has got something to tell you and you will listen,” she said firmly into his ear.

He looked down at the child.

Clara squeezed the little girl’s hand. “Tell my friend what happened.”

Aerial began in a high voice with her

eyes wide open. "There was a bad noise. No one else could hear it, except me and Mummy." She put her hands over her ears. "I did this. Mummy said she had to go check down in the basement because she works here and that's where her stuff is. She told me and Daddy to go straight home." Aerial's eyes started to water.

Clara watched the Doctor watching the child. His face began to soften, his lips loosening, his head tilting very slightly to one side. That was a look she recognised. Curiosity.

"What happened next?" Clara prompted.

Aerial shook her head and tensed her little shoulders.

"Can you be brave and tell us?" Clara whispered, glancing up at the Doctor.

"The sound got really loud, and that's when the monsters came alive. Everyone laughed at first. But Daddy said it wasn't a joke. A man... he was laughing and laughing, and... the monster bit his arm right off. Then everyone was shouting and screaming and I lost my daddy." The little girl choked, and tears flowed down her green cheeks.

Clara prayed as hard as she ever had.

The Doctor got off his stool. He looked hard at Clara. Then he squatted in front of Aerial. "Is your mummy Ori-lien?"

Aerial nodded.

"I bet she has these brilliant ears, just like you." The Doctor gently touched the tips of the girl's pointed ears as he spoke.

She nodded and smiled a little through her tears. "Mummy and me can hear

much better than Daddy. He has ordinary ears, like you." She reached out a hesitant hand and touched his ear.

The Doctor looked up at Clara. "Narrows it down."

Clara knew she had him. He was back in the game.

At that moment a man ran into the bar, clutching a small phone-like object that beeped as it approached the little girl. "Aerial!"

"Daddy!"

"Are you okay?" He clutched Aerial to his chest, and cast a wary glance at Clara and the Doctor.

"This nice lady looked after me." The little girl glanced up at Clara with a smile.

"Thank the gods. Thank *you*," he said to Clara.

"Is Mummy back?" Aerial asked.

"No honey, not yet." He looked stricken and turned to Clara. "It's madness out there. Everything started moving, the exhibits. People thought it was part of the show, but... it was carnage..." He shuddered.

The Doctor asked, "Where did your wife go?"

"Down to the basement under the main communications relay. She said there'd been a rogue signal all week and it was suddenly amplified. Do you know what's going on?"

The Doctor's face, for a moment, almost cracked a smile. "Haven't a clue." Clara's spirits rose. This was more like it; the Doctor with a mystery to chew on.

"Look, we need to go," the man went on. "My wife might be back home by

now. The transmission towers must all be down. I can't call her. But thank you for taking care of Aerial."

Clara watched Aerial and her father hurry away. She turned to the Doctor. "You've sobered up."

"I've suppressed the alcohol in my system. It'll probably catch up with me later, so we better get a move on."

"Okay, so where do we start?" Clara saw that familiar gleam in his eye, and finally felt she was getting somewhere. "Basement." He started off across the room. "Just this once, mind you. Soon as this is done, I'm coming right back to my barstool."

Clara hurried after him. "Oh, my Doctor," she said under her breath. It was good to be with him again.

The basement was dark with the cloying, musty smell of basements the universe over.

"What are we looking for?" Clara asked.

"We need to find the source of the signal. There must be a relay around here somewhere." The Doctor sighed in irritation. "I really need my—"

Clara grinned and held up the sonic screwdriver.

The Doctor snatched it. "How?" He narrowed his eyes. "You got in my ship. No one does that."

"Perhaps she thought you needed a friend."

"Everyone seems to think they know what I need," he said darkly. He scanned the area, and without looking her way, he added, "So, *Dinah*, do we travel together then?"

"From time to time," Clara replied un-

der her breath. She'd promised herself: no regrets, no emotional reactions. Louder, she said, "Probably best not to ask. You know, paradox, temporal instability."

"Someone taught you well," he said, while waving the screwdriver above his head. "Aha!"

He approached a door, labelled "High Voltage – Danger of Death: Do not Enter." Grinning, he sonic-ed the lock open and stepped through.

The room was dark, so Clara retrieved a small torch from her pocket. She swept the beam across the floor, and then stepped around the corner to investigate further.

The Doctor, busy checking an instrument box of some sort, looked up and called, "Don't wander—" then he seemed to change his mind and mumbled, "Do what you like."

Clara found switch and flipped on the lights. The room held an array of equipment. Along one wall was a bank of computers, with an odd small black box connected by a tangle of wires to a control panel. The display read *3.00*. *That* didn't seem right.

"Doctor, I think you should look at this," Clara called.

At that moment, a muffled cry came from behind a side door.

"Someone's trapped," Clara exclaimed. "Dinah," the Doctor called, backing around the corner, his voice low and urgent.

Then she saw what he was backing away *from*: a beetle the size of a St Bernard, with far too many legs, a shiny black body, and pincers swiping

and snapping at the air as it scuttled forward. Then she heard more shouting and thumping, as if someone was banging the door with their feet.

Three high-pitched beeps came from her left, jerking her attention from the beetle back to that box. The numbers started moving: 2.59, 2.58... Clara swore under her breath. A countdown. In her experience, countdowns were never counting down to anything *good*.

She looked at this new-old Doctor. He was in his element: she could almost see his brain whirring; back away from the beetle while analysing its origin, figure out how to defuse that bomb, and then break into that cupboard. It would all come together in some gloriously muddled, haphazard Doctor-y plan. Oh, how she missed this! She moved closer to him, and without thinking, grasped his hand.

He looked at her in surprise, but then grinned and said, "Hello."

Clara smiled too, feeling more alive than she had in a good long while. "So, Doctor," she said. "How are we going to win?"

The Doctor dodged as the beetle snapped its huge claws at his legs. "Can you keep that busy?" he said to the woman who had called herself Dinah, and hadn't breathed in or out once since he'd met her. He let that pass; she was a riddle for another day. The clock read 2.09.

Dinah grabbed a chair and swung it with a gutsy swipe. The beetle snatched one of the chair's legs in its pincers and jerked back. She yelped, as

it must have jarred her shoulder, but she didn't flinch or cower. There was another jolt, and a crack as the creature pulled the metal leg into its jaws, splintering it from the plastic base. Dinah shoved the remains of the chair at the beetle's head. It's eyes glowed red and it rattled and hissed as it scuttled back across the floor.

"Keep it busy while I do something about *that*," the Doctor yelled, jabbing a finger at the bomb. He set about untangling the wires. It was a homemade device: the power source from a defunct android and the wiring from the core of a plasma coil, all bundled together with some T-64 explosives. Small, but powerful. Easily enough to collapse this basement. He'd handled so many weapons of destruction these past years, most of them a million times more powerful than this firework. The accusing screams of a generation of children blasted his ears, searing flames burned cities in his mind. This tiny bomb was a dust mote in a giant's eye. Did it really matter if he defused it or not? He'd fought the Daleks so hard and so long, yet there had been no victory. Gallifrey still fell. He could close his eyes and let this timer run down. Perhaps he'd splinter into a million pieces and regeneration wouldn't be possible. He could fall into the abyss. *No more*.

Then he looked at Dinah, desperately smashing the beetle with the remains of a chair. Did she deserve to die because he was war-weary? And little Aerial, waiting at home for her Mummy. He shook his head. The Doctor of

War could do nothing to save the children of Gallifrey, but *he* could do something about *this*.

The timer flicked around to *1.24*.

He neutralised the power source by reversing the polarity of the magnetic flux, but in response the clock beeped once and counted down faster.

“Doctor!” Dinah yelled, “A little help?”

The beetle had backed her into a corner. Most of the chair was scattered across the floor in bits. Dinah held tight to one single leg.

“A little busy here!” the Doctor yelled back. The clock read *0.43* He yanked the wire joining the power source to the T-64 and held his breath.

The countdown continued.

The beetle snapped and clicked, pinning Dinah to the wall, snatching at her with vicious claws. She flung her face from side to side as she tried to hold it back with the chair leg. From the corner of his eye, he registered an odd ridge down the creature’s back. Filing that away in his brain for later he turned back to the bomb. Still ticking. *0.16*. There must be more than one connection to the power source. He tipped it over to look at the underside. Sure enough, another wire. He tugged it.

It didn’t move.

With a crack, Dinah’s last defence snapped in two. “Doctor!” Dinah screamed. She thrust the broken chair leg aside.

0.09. Cursing, he loosened the arc-solder attaching the wires to the battery with the sonic screwdriver. Here goes nothing. He gave the wire a

hefty tug.

The countdown froze at *0.02*.

In a last desperate effort to keep the beetle’s jaws at bay, Dinah wedged her foot into its belly.

The Doctor left the defused bomb on the bench and grabbed the first thing he saw—a fire extinguisher—and swung it at the beetle with gusto. It made contact with a solid *thud*. The blow flipped the beetle and sent it hissing across the floor on its back. Dinah cast him a relieved, perhaps even admiring, look and then she laughed aloud. Her smile brightened the gloomy basement. It had been a long time since he’d seen anyone smile, and certainly not at him. He’d spent too long digging in dark places, haunted by the battle-weary eyes of soldiers desperate for answers he didn’t have. He’d forgotten what it was like to have a friend.

The banging on the door and muffled cries continued.

He thrust the fire extinguisher at Dinah and set to the door with his sonic screwdriver. All things considered, he mused, flicking the settings to release the code on the door mechanism, this was much more fun than sitting on a barstool with a vermillion brandy for company. The door beeped open. Inside, a green-skinned woman lay on the floor, mouth, hands, and feet bound, legs raised mid-kick.

“Hello,” he said. “You must be Aerial’s mum. I’m—” he paused. Who was he now? Not the warrior; that terrible chapter was done. Perhaps it was time to move forward. “I’m the Doc—” The

word felt odd in his throat, like an old shoe that had gone brittle through decades of neglect. Did he even know *how* to be the Doctor again?

Beside him, Dinah slammed the fire extinguisher into the beetle's head as it bore down on her.

The woman on the floor made a muffled cry. Whoever he turned out to be, he couldn't leave Dinah and this woman to be chomped by a giant beetle, so he stepped into the cupboard and yanked her to her feet.

"Umph tyf mf!"

"Eh? Oh!" He released the ropes binding her feet, and was about to start on her hands and gag, when Dinah screamed.

The beetle pinned her to the wall again. Thrusting her head to one side as its huge black mandibles snapped at her face, she yelled, "Doctor!"

His brain snapped back into action. Bomb defused, captive freed. Now to stop the bug from ripping his new friend limb from limb. This cupboard would contain the snapper nicely.

Dragging Aerial's mum out with him, he searched for a weapon. "I need something to shove it with."

The captive shuffled back into the cupboard.

"Oi, get out of there, I've got a plan," the Doctor yelled.

There was a muffled "*Oom!*" from the cupboard.

Dinah yelled, "A little help, please!"

The Doctor followed the captive, who was trying to point—with her hands behind her back—at the corner.

"Oom!"

The Doctor understood. "Ah! Broom!

Why didn't you say so?" He grabbed the handle of the sturdiest-looking broom and dashed back to Dinah. Then he popped his head back into the cupboard, grinning. "You might want to get out of the way."

The Doctor turned back to Dinah. The fire extinguisher was jammed against her chest pinned there by the snapping beetle. With a furious yell he swung the broom at its underbelly. It flew across the floor and landed on its back, immediately rocking on its shell, legs scrabbling to right itself.

"You took your bloody time!" Dinah yelled.

The Doctor gaped at Dinah. "We swear now?"

"It starts to happen!" Dinah took her place beside him, and shoved the beetle towards the now-vacant cupboard with the fire extinguisher.

The Doctor watched her from the corner of his eye, bashing away at the monster. She was smiling, despite the danger. Just the sort of woman he should travel with. If he was going to travel with anyone again, of course. He hadn't decided.

The still-half-bound captive took her place beside him and added a few well-timed kicks to the effort. Bit by bit, they pushed, prodded, and bumped the snapping beetle back towards the cupboard.

"On three. One big shove and then I'll get the door," the Doctor said. "One, two, three!" Dinah thrust the extinguisher, Aerial's Mum shoved with the sole of her shoe, and together they swept the thrashing beetle over the

threshold.

The Doctor grabbed the door and slammed it shut. A black antenna slashed back and forth, trapped between the door and the frame. He shouldered the door shut, severing the antenna, and then used his sonic screwdriver to lock the door tight. The antenna continued to wiggle on the floor. He picked it up, turning it over in his hands. It was the same black all the way through. Fascinating. He'd seen something like this before...

He turned back to Dinah, who was undoing the rope around the Orilien woman's wrists with a remarkable degree of skill.

He pointed at the ropes with the antenna. "Do a lot of this, do we?"

"Fighting monsters and getting tied up? You could say that."

He continued to take readings from the communications array, but every time Dinah glanced his way, there was something in her eyes he couldn't fathom. Her mouth curled into the faint echo of a smile that seemed happy and sad all at once. Perhaps that's where he went wrong, trying to do it all alone. Perhaps what you need most as you run across the universe is a hand to hold. Those deep eyes of hers held a story; maybe one day he'd find out what it was.

The Orilien woman finally spat the gag out of her mouth. "Thank the gods."

"Thank the Doctor," Dinah said, nodding in his direction. "I'm—" she paused. He stopped fiddling with the communications array and glanced up as she finished, "—Dinah."

Perhaps he wasn't the only one with an identity crisis.

"Ashreld," said the woman, and pulled herself up to her full height. "I'm in charge of communications for the park."

"Are you?" The Doctor flicked a switch to test the range on the transceivers and the communication equipment. "What's the corporate full-scale alien-encroachment countermeasure policy?"

"Er, well, actually I'm more technical support." Ashreld's face flushed a little greener, and her shoulders slumped. "No one would listen. I've been trying to tell the operations manager all week something's wrong."

The Doctor shrugged sympathetically.

"Bureaucracy. Kills you every time."

"I finally got her to come down here, and she tied me up and shoved me in the cupboard," Ashreld said indignantly. "She's obviously in on it." Ashreld tapped the bench. "You found my bomb, then?"

"*Your* bomb?" Dinah exclaimed.

"Yes. I thought if I destroyed the signal at its source..."

"Great plan," the Doctor said, wiggling the antenna at Ashreld. "You don't understand something, so you try to blow it up?"

Dinah put her hand on his arm. "Doctor, whatever's doing this is running havoc in the park. It's hell out there." She squinted at him, and then added, "You know what's going on, don't you?"

This mysterious woman from his future, with the pretty eyes and sad smile, really *did* know him well. But

how? "Are you going to tell me how we know each other?"

"Nah," Dinah said. "Now spill. Have you seen this before?"

"A long time ago." He passed her the antenna, interested to see what she'd make of it. "What's up with this?"

She gave it an experimental twang and then looked at the end where it had broken off. "It's...like plastic."

"Living plastic."

"Aerial said all the exhibits came to life..."

"You saw my daughter? And my husband?" Ashreld exclaimed.

"They got out of the monster zone. They went home. They're safe." Dinah squeezed Ashreld's arm.

"If I know this lot they'll be looking for a new home. The Nestene Consciousness." He took the antenna back from Dinah. "I couldn't save their planet." So many planets he couldn't save, including his own. Gallifrey's shining mountains and the silver leaves that made the forests seem to burn in the early morning light. Gone. All gone.

He rubbed the back of his neck and closed his eyes. A flash of orange burned the back of his eyes. A billion screams rang in his ears.

"That doesn't give them the right to wreak havoc on mine." Ashreld jerked him back to the present.

"No, it doesn't, he agreed. "But I think we should talk to them before we resort to blowing them up, don't you?"

Dinah stepped in between the Doctor and Ashreld and held up her hands. "Oh, absolutely. I'm all for sitting down and talking," she said, with that same

sad smile. The Doctor tracked her as she walked across the room. Still no vital signs; that was *really* odd. He shook his head. She was right; probably best if he didn't know.

Dinah picked up the bomb from the bench. "Is this safe now?"

"Yep."

She walked over and stood in front of him. What was she up to? Still smiling, she tugged his leather jacket, pulled open his pocket and popped the bomb inside. "Never hurts to have a Plan B, though, eh, Doctor?"

"We don't need a bomb, we need anti-plastic," he said firmly. No more red buttons. There had to be a better way. There were no winners in the Time War. The Nestene were collateral damage—just like the children of Gallifrey—of a war they didn't start. His hands clenched into fists, and, for a moment, the screams returned.

Ashreld was talking, but her voice sounded far away. "Anti-plastic? What in the three moons is that?"

The Doctor's head started to swim. He wouldn't be able to suppress the alcohol in his system forever, but he could hold it back just long enough to get this job done.

"Doctor?" Dinah said. "Have you got some?"

Her voice dragged him back. "No, but I can make it. Then we just need to find the Nestene Consciousness and ask them politely to clear off."

Dinah smiled, and he noticed again how she lit up that dim basement. "Come on, then," she said. "Let's go make some anti-plastic." Then she

tapped his pocket. "Better hang on to that, though, just in case."

Clara led the way out of the basement and back up the stairs. All in all, things were going well, she decided. The Doctor had seemed to accept her name was Dinah, or, at least, he wasn't questioning her about her identity. *Not* being eaten by a giant beetle and not being blown up was a good afternoon's work around the Doctor. She glanced back at him and couldn't help but smile. He certainly had a knack for finding trouble, in any lifetime. He spoke animatedly to Ashreld as they climbed the stairs.

"We need to work out where the signal came from," he said. "Would you recognise it if you heard it again?"

"Yes, I think I would," Ashreld replied. "But, like I said, it stopped a few hours ago."

"Not a problem. The TARDIS can track it."

"You *can't*. It's just not there anymore," Ashreld said, with a touch of impatience. "That's why I tried to blow up the equipment before it could start up again and propagate through the park." She shook her head. "We'll never find it, unless you've found a way to defy the laws of causality and scan *yesterday's* EM emissions." Ashreld laughed, as if she was a little afraid he actually might mean what he'd said.

"He never lets little things like the laws of time and space stop him. I expect he can piggyback a temporal P-wave and trace the signal back to its origin." Clara said.

The Doctor nodded thoughtfully. "That could work. If we follow the signal we should be able to find the Nestene control vat and —"

"Blow it up?" Ashreld said hopefully.

"*Talk* to it," the Doctor said firmly.

"With a vial of anti-plastic in reserve—just in case," Clara added, under her breath. She'd travelled with the Doctor too long, and knew the universe too well, to blindly give anything the benefit of the doubt, no matter what his post-Time War ideals held him to.

They paused at the top of the basement stairs. The concourse was empty now, the running, screaming people gone. Only a flipped-over trash can and a child's lost teddy bear in the centre of the pavement remained.

Ashreld took out what Clara presumed was her telephone. "No signal," she said. "The park relay must be down." She shoved it back in her pocket and surveyed the scene.

Clara realised that Ashreld must be terribly worried about Aerial and her husband. "I'm sure they got home safely," she said, trying to sound reassuring. "Come on, the sooner we deal with this, the sooner you can get home."

Ashreld nodded. "Aerial heard it first. Her hearing's even better than mine." She looked up abruptly. "Speaking of which...something's coming. We might want to —"

Clara heard it seconds later: a roar, and then the *thud, thud, thud* of footsteps, rapidly closing in. "What's down there?" she asked, nodding in the direction of the sound. But Clara didn't have to wait for an answer. She saw a

sign directing the families to the park's newest attraction, *The Land that Time Forgot*.

"I don't suppose the prehistoric period of this planet was populated by butterflies, was it?" she asked.

The Doctor looked at her scornfully.

"Don't be daft. They had proper, slaving, great proto-reptiles, like any self-respecting early geological epoch."

"Well, that's a relief," Clara said.

"Wouldn't want butterflies to flutter us to death, now would we?"

"Have you two finished? Because I think now would be a good time —" Ashreld began.

The footsteps crashed closer. The ground shook under Clara's feet.

Remembering his unhealthy fascination with prehistoric creatures, she tugged the Doctor's hand. He stood stock-still. A mighty reptile, tall as a bus and almost as long, dinosaur-like with its long tail thrashing, crashed around the corner.

"Fantastic," the Doctor said with a wide grin.

"No," Clara said, yanking on his arm.

"It's not *fantastic*. It's dangerous!"

"Terrasaur," said Ashreld. "Aerial has a stuffed one at the end of her bed."

"Wonderful. Now I know what's going to eat me I can die happy!" Clara shouted.

It opened its jaws, jerked up on its back legs, and roared. Clara expected the blasting breath to stink of rotting meat, much like the dinosaur on the Thames that had swallowed the TARDIS many years before. But the roar sounded like a recording, and, like the

beetle, the intruder's movements were jerky, not fluid.

"It's not going to eat us. It hasn't got a stomach. More plastic," the Doctor said.

"An angry plastic monster can still do plenty of damage," Clara yelled.

"Come on!" She dragged him out of the concourse and towards the bar where he'd parked his TARDIS.

The creature's thick tail thwacked into a wall, sending a shower of dust into the air. Its claws were as black as a dark star and made a scrabbling, scratchy noise against the marble floor as it changed direction.

The terrasaur thundered towards them. As the Doctor opened the door to the TARDIS, Clara could see the doubt in Ashreld's eyes, and took a flash of guilty pleasure in knowing what would come next.

"Never mind what it looks like," she cried. "Just get in!"

"But —"

"It's stronger than it looks, trust me," Clara said, and shoved Ashreld through the door after the Doctor. She closed it behind her, and then skipped past Ashreld as the Orilien remained rooted to the spot. Clara took a place next to the Doctor, by the console, and they both stood, arms folded, watching Ashreld's face.

"It never gets old, does it?" Clara said to the Doctor.

Ashreld opened and closed her mouth several times.

The Doctor sighed. "Just once, though, I'd like to see someone who appreciates the philosophical and mathemati-

cal implications of trans-dimensional engineering, rather than just standing there like a goldfish.”

Clara looked at him sceptically. “Good luck with that.”

Ashreld found her voice. “How... how does all this fit in... a little blue box?”

“Well, I’m glad you asked, Ashreld—”

“Doctor,” Clara interrupted, “perhaps you could save the lecture in non-Euclidian hyperspectral geometry until we’ve sorted out the killer plastic raging through a family play area?”

“Fair enough. Anti-plastic. We need the non-organic, organic chemistry lab. Last time I checked, it was next to the Jacuzzi and sauna.”

“You have a sauna? You kept that quiet!” Clara said. There were plenty of times, after they got lost in mist-covered swamps of Degalas, or when she fell into that pool of sentient slime on Grennex Major—to name but a few—when a Jacuzzi would have been just the thing to ease her aching bones.

The Doctor just shrugged and headed out of the console room. Clara tugged Ashreld’s arm. “We better keep up. I once took a wrong turn and spent the night in the console room with seven different versions of myself.”

“What?”

“Long story. Come on.”

The non-organic, organic chemistry lab was, much like the rest of the sentient time ship, a baffling array of highly advanced technology and quirky style. There were round things on the wall, microscopes and beakers on the bench, and a half-eaten sandwich, its

edges curling upward, on a plate by a Bunsen burner. Next to that was a hole in the bench. Clara peered down, and down, and down. The hole must have gone through several decks.

“What have you been up to?” she asked.

“Trying to create anti-metal to eat Dalek casing. It didn’t work. Just kept eating through everything.” Then he added indignantly to the air. “I asked you to tidy up!”

“Who’s he talking to?” Ashreld whispered to Clara.

“Oh, his ship. He does that.”

Ashreld shook her head. “Um, I feel like I’ve fallen down the sperquil hole into the Land of Wonders.”

“Maybe you have, Ashreld,” Clara replied, sympathetically. She remembered the day she first burst into the TARDIS. She accused the Doctor of trying to tempt her into a snog box, but it turned out to be so much more. Oh, she tried to keep hold of a normal life, go to work, keep her own friends and just see him on Wednesdays, but he was like an addiction. Soon, Wednesdays were not enough. She thought they would run forever. But everything ends. A wave of sadness threatened to sweep through her. She forced herself back to the present.

“What do you need?” Clara’s voice seemed faint to her own ears, so she cleared her throat and tried again. “Doctor, what do you need to make anti-plastic?”

“Mainly, peace and quiet. You seem to know a lot about how things work around here. Do you think you could

use a temporal P-wave to scan yesterday's EM planetary emissions?"

"That's a good idea," Clara said, drily.

"I suppose if I look in that cupboard I'll find a chrono-sensitive radio receiver."

The Doctor shrugged, as if to say, 'It's the TARDIS,' and he set to work rummaging in a locker labelled 'Samples.'

Clara opened the nearest cupboard. Sure enough, there was an oblong contraption with a row of buttons beneath a dial on the front and a frequency tracker on the top. She pulled it out.

"So, what, the very thing we need is right here?" Ashreld said. "This isn't the Land of Wonders, it's the House of Miracles,"

Clara stood up, clutching the device.

"The TARDIS has a mind of her own.

She hardly ever does what you want.

But she always gives you what you need."

She put the scanner down on a bench on the far side of the lab, giving the Doctor's ever-growing pile of chemicals, in tiny pots and vials—and some disturbing orange goo—a wide berth. He'd taken off his black jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and started work with a big grin.

Ashreld noticed Clara watching the Doctor. "Do this a lot, you and him?"

"Not lately." Clara forced a smile. "We used to. But you know what they say, all good things—"

"—are over too soon?"

Clara laughed. "Something like that. Come on, help me get this set up. In which EM band did you notice the transmission?"

"It was right at the low end for radio waves, around three kilohertz."

"Okay. I can backtrack using the P-wave and scan everything that's been broadcast over the past 24 hours. Then we can pinpoint where it went." She raised her voice to get the Doctor's attention. "We can use the TARDIS to get above the park, can't we?"

With a steaming vial in his hand, he looked up from his bench. "Rather not. The Nestene will soon notice any advanced tech hovering above their heads. Better to track them on foot and keep the element of surprise."

Less than an hour later, Clara, the Doctor, and Ashreld strode across the deserted concourse again. The Doctor carried two vials of freshly synthesised anti-plastic in his pocket.

Clara surveyed the empty podiums she passed. It was the middle of the day now. An hour earlier the park had been packed full of happy families, children running, eating the frizzed corn, high on sparking soda and the excitement of the best family day out in the sector. Now, everything was eerily silent.

Most of the exhibits that had no doubt delighted Aerial this morning—from prehistoric creatures to laughing clowns—were missing. The ground was littered with the evidence of the frenzied rush to escape: a red scarf, a purple sippy cup with a unicorn on the side, and an abandoned backpack with its contents scattered over the ground. Ashreld pulled her comms unit from her pocket again. She shook it in frustration when it didn't work. Clara realised part of her must be longing to

rush home and make sure Aerial and her husband were safe.

"What will they do, these Nestenes?" Ashreld asked the Doctor.

"The creatures from the park are just foot soldiers. I expect they've already replaced key figures in your government. They'll be staging a full-on takeover as we speak."

"The military will do something. I mean, they'll realise where the creatures came from."

"True. We better get a move on before the army arrives to mess things up," the Doctor said. "Dinah, have you established the P-wave?" The Doctor nodded at the shoe-box sized scanner Clara had constructed.

"Yeah, I'm routing it via the TARDIS temporal carrier waves. I've found the entry point of the signal, I just need to..." She hurried a few paces forward.

"I think it's this way." Clara led the way through the park, past a still carousel and an empty stall that sold hot dogs and soda, with its door flapping gently in the breeze. The device gave off a series of beeps, speeding up when the signal was stronger and slowing down when she strayed off the path. The beeps sounded closer and closer together, and, finally, Clara stopped as the rapid *beep, beep, beep* became a continuous tone. She looked up at the building in front of her. She'd stopped right in front of the House of Horrors.

"The invading alien space goo is never underneath the gift shop, is it?" she said.

"Perhaps the exhibits have already

gone..." Ashreld said hopefully.

Clara stared at her and shook her head. "Never happens." She turned to the Doctor. "What are we looking for?"

The Doctor, for his part, blinked several times and staggered slightly.

Clara grabbed him around the waist and motioned to Ashreld. "Help me." They managed to get him propped against the wall.

"Doctor?" Clara prised open his eyelids and peered into his electric blue eyes. Striking eyes, she noted. Very *blue*.

He batted her hand away irritably. "It's the alcohol. I need to get my system to produce more specialist macrophages to deal with the booze in my blood." He grinned stupidly at her. "Do we have good times together, you and me?"

Her heart ached as he asked her that question. She closed her eyes for a moment. "The best," she said quietly. There was no time to fall into nostalgia or pity. They had an invasion to thwart. She gripped his shoulder. "You need to sober yourself up."

"I'm doing it." After a moment or two, he shook his head. "That's better. It's only a temporary, mind. I'll have to sleep it off sooner rather than later."

"So, we're looking for a big vat of living alien plastic in the cellar of the House of Horrors," Clara said, taking a step towards the entrance, feeling the rush of adventure grip her. "Same old, same old," she said. "Just the Doctor and his friends fighting monsters and saving planets."

Clara stepped into darkness, still clutching the radio transceiver. It crackled and hissed with static. She turned the dial until she heard a reedy voice.

"Of course, you have full authority on the ground, Major Simms, but I urge you to think carefully before using a blast of that magnitude. The casualties in the surrounding town would create a, *ah*, difficult PR situation."

"PR's your job. Leave me to do mine," the Major snapped back. The line went dead.

Clara looked up at Ashreld. "Who's this Major Simms?"

Ashreld ran her hands through her hair. "Oh, no. Smash-It Simms. He wiped out a whole native colony to shut down a riot that started after one of *his* officers shot a young native man." She took a step back toward the front door. "I'm sorry, I've got to get Aerial and Benj away."

The Doctor gripped her arm. "There's no time. The best chance to save your family is stopping the Nestene. Then the monsters will deactivate and Simms won't need to blow anything up."

Ashreld still looked uncertain. Clara squeezed her arm. "You get Aerial and your husband away, then what? What about your neighbours? And all the kids at Aerial's school?"

"I don't know..."

Clara could see the indecision on her face. "Think about it, Ashreld! How are you going to tell Aerial all her friends are dead?"

"Okay, okay," Ashreld's shoulders slumped. "Where do we start?"

"We need to find the basement," Clara said in a determined tone, leading Ashreld gently forward by the arm before she could change her mind.

"Uh, stairs are by the fire exits at the back," Ashreld said.

"Lead on, MacDuff," the Doctor said cheerily.

Clara followed close behind, and hoped Ashreld was up to playing the role of the avenging hero.

Cobwebs and luminous paintings of ghouls and ghosts adorned the walls. So far, fairly standard scare-the-kids haunted house fare; nothing too terrifying. Then Clara caught movement in the corner of her eye. At least, she thought so. Then, a dragging noise, perhaps feet shuffling and scraping on the floor. She quickened her pace.

A deep clang of chains behind. Ashreld froze, flinging her hands to her super-sensitive ears.

Clara pushed her gently forward. "Keep going," she urged. Nothing good ever came from standing still in situations like this.

"Ah. Okay," Ashreld muttered.

Clara gave a reassuring pat on the back. "You're doing great." She remembered very well the exhilarating fear of being plunged into the Doctor's world, where the impossible became the everyday, and forgotten childhood terrors burst into life.

They pressed on through the darkness. Something long and thin brushed lightly against her face. Clara batted it away. What the hell was that? She

reached upwards and closed her fingers around... fabric. It was just strands of cotton hanging from the ceiling. She laughed, the high-pitched laugh of relief, not humour. It was nothing dangerous and, to prove it, she swept the rest of the strands away with a wide stroke of her arm. Perhaps Ashreld had been right and the ghouls really were gone.

Ashreld led them on. The Doctor was close behind. Very close, Clara noticed. So close, in fact, she felt his hand on her shoulder.

"Doctor, is that you?" she whispered.

"Me, what?" he said from a few paces further back.

Through the gloom, she looked down to see a pale hand with slender fingers, ending in long, black fingernails resting lightly on her shoulder. Not the Doctor's hand at all.

She screamed and leapt away, barreling forward into Ashreld.

"What's wrong?" Ashreld's voice was a full octave higher than before.

"Nothing. Keep going! That way. Towards the door!" Clara urged, pushing Ashreld forward through the blackened exhibit. "Doctor, where are you?"

"I'm right here," he said.

She moved towards the sound of his voice as if it were a beacon. If she could just find something solid in this nightmare landscape, she'd feel better. She clutched hold of his leather jacket tight. When she had him in her grasp, she turned to look for Ashreld. Indistinct shapes closed in, black silhouettes and shadows, nightmare visions in the dark. Then she felt more than saw

Ashreld beside her, shaking. Clara tried to grip her hand, but Ashreld backed away. Another shadowy shape moved closer to the door, blocking their way. The radio in Clara's pocket hissed and a voice crackled.

"This is Alpha Grenada to Echo Base. I have eyes on hostiles massing at the park gates."

"What are they doing?" came a reply over the radio.

"Hard to say, sir, but if they leave the park and get into the city, we'll have a much bigger problem on our hands."

"Stand by for deployment run." The hissing stopped and the radio fell silent.

"That doesn't sound good," Clara said. She sensed Ashreld inching further away. "Where are you going?" Clara hissed at the Orilien woman.

Ashreld's face seemed grey. She tugged her hands through her hair. "I can't. I'm sorry, Simms will take out the whole town to stop those creatures spreading. I've got to get my family away before—"

"No, Ashreld—" Clara cried, but the Orilien was disappearing into darkness. "We have to stick together!"

The figures in front of the door began to stir, moving forward in awkward, jerky movements.

The Doctor held tight to Clara's hand. "Let her go."

"She'll never get out of the park on her own!"

The Doctor's voice sounded very old to her then, as he said, "Time was I thought I could save everyone. Now I know that's not true. Let her go. We

save who we can.”

He was right. He’d taught her that in their time together. They saved who they could. While there was a breath of air in his lungs he never gave up, but sometimes the only choices were bad ones. He still had to choose. She turned her attention back to the nightmare shapes, lurking in the darkness. Through the low light, she could just make a vampire’s sharp teeth and the lumbering form of a wolf-man, all standing between them and the basement.

“These guys look more agile than the others,” Clara said.

“Those were foot soldiers. This is the elite guard,” the Doctor said. There was almost something cheery in his tone.

Clara squinted at him. “Do you have a plan, Doctor?”

“Yeah, I’m gonna clear that lot out of the way and then *you* are going to talk to the Nestene.” He pressed one of the vials of anti-plastic into her hand.

“They’ll tear you apart!” She looked desperately around for a weapon. Even a fire extinguisher would do, but there was nothing near.

Clara gripped the Doctor’s hand tightly. She saw his grin through the gloom, and remembered other smiles on different faces; always with the same hearts beating underneath. She was sure of one thing: she wouldn’t let him face this alone. “We’ll do it together,” she said.

In the half-light, the vampire’s face, as pale as death itself—with blood smeared around its mouth and down

its chin—turned towards them. It took a step forward, followed by a figure wrapped in dirty rags. Clara reminded her panicked mind they were plastic, not supernatural phantasms. But, try as she might, she couldn’t tear her eyes off the vampire’s bloody fangs, or the werewolf’s snarling jaws. It felt grotesquely real.

Claws scabbled and scraped on the floor. She felt the Doctor’s grip on her hand tighten. Could this be it? Surely they couldn’t die here? She *knew* he didn’t die here, because years from now he would ring on her doorbell dressed in a monk’s habit. But she also knew the laws of time were in constant flux. Anything that might happen could happen. Trap street or not, the final full stop on the last page of *her* story could be falling into place right now.

The wolf poised, ready to spring, fangs bared.

Then, a flash of steel. Ashreld ran towards them, and thrust a sword into her hands.

“Will these help?” she said, shoving a flail towards the Doctor, adding, “Exhibits.” Ashreld herself gripped the handle of a blood-stained axe.

“I thought you left,” Clara said, relief washing over her. Ashreld was all right. More than that, the Orilien woman was fighting back.

“I tried. But I couldn’t do it. You were right. We stop this, we save everyone.” Ashreld swung the axe at the vampire and chopped its arm clean off. The vampire, thrown off balance, staggered towards the wall.

The wolf leaped. Clara plunged the sword deep into its chest. It jerked forward, slashing with razor sharp claws and Clara realised she had done as much good as impaling a shop window dummy.

"Help me," she called, "shove it into there." Clara pointed at a wall covered with loose padding, over bricks, designed to save scared kiddies from bumps, but she had another use in mind. "Can you destabilise the atomic structure in the wall behind there? Just for a moment?"

The Doctor grinned, and raised an eyebrow. "I like the way you think." He aimed his sonic screwdriver at the wall, and with the other hand gripped the sword handle with her. Together they pushed until the snarling, snapping creature was pinned to the wall.

Ashreld, now wrestling with a sprite, gave her assailant a hefty kick. The creature spun off, tumbling through the air with its little wings flapping. It came to rest on the floor in front of Clara with its delicate mouth in a surprised "o." She almost felt sorry for the poor little thing—until, with bared teeth, it launched at her legs. She dodged. The way to the door was clear. "This way!" She yelled for the Doctor and Ashreld to follow.

On the staircase, the Doctor found a light switch and the stairwell filled with bright, fluorescent illumination.

Ashreld slammed the door behind them, looking a shade greener than she had before, but her jaw set.

Clara squinted in the brightness as they hurried into the basement. A

deep vat, about the size of a large Jacuzzi, smoked and fizzled in the centre of the room.

"That's foul!" Ashreld said, choking.

"What is?" Clara asked. Ashreld's eyes were watering and even the Doctor had wrinkled his nose.

"It's like burning rubber," Ashreld said.

The Doctor looked at Clara sideways.

"You can't smell anything, can you?"

"I don't want to talk about it," she said.

The Doctor shrugged and didn't press further.

Clara strode over to the vat. Its contents were bubbling and broiling away with mini-volcanoes erupting on the surface. "Is it supposed to be doing that?"

The Doctor peeked tentatively over the edge. Most of the orange gloop moved freely, but at the edges of the vat it stuck to the sides in thick, blackened clumps.

"Er, I don't think so," he said. "Things getting a bit sticky in there?" he asked the Nestene.

An angry gloop of molten plastic flew in his direction. He took a hasty step backwards and held up his hands. "Just asking." He turned to Clara. "It thinks I'm being rude and I should address it formally."

"Well, you could keep that in mind," Clara muttered. "I'm sure the Shadow Proclamation has a protocol—"

The substance in the vat spat and hissed as the plastic sides started to bow and creak under the strain.

The Doctor scanned the Nestene with his screwdriver. "I don't think this

planet agrees with you.”

Ashreld looked at the Doctor. “What’s the matter with it?”

“The plastic matrix’s become unstable. I think it’s the high ion content of your atmosphere.”

Clara looked up as the door at the top of the steps rattled. “We’re gonna have company soon. What do we do?” She thrust her hand in her pocket and clutched the vial of anti-plastic.

“I can help you find a more suitable planet —” the Doctor said to the Nestene.

The vat rattled hard and its casing stretched. Some of the orange gloop oozed between the cracks and onto the floor.

“What do you mean, you’ve already made plans?” the Doctor asked, indignantly.

“Doctor!” Ashreld cried. The door burst open. The wolf bounded down the steps.

Clara pulled the anti-plastic from her pocket and stepped toward the vat, holding it high above the oozing gloop. “You better stop. Don’t think I won’t destroy you if that’s what it takes.” She felt the force of her words deep in her chest: it felt good. He had told her once she made an excellent Doctor, but somehow in her grief at losing him she’d forgotten. Time to start believing again.

A machine covered in luminous dials and buttons, like the dashboard of a high-tech racing car. Or a spaceship. She squinted hard at the dish as it swivelled of its own accord. A receiver or a *transmitter*? The Doctor saw it,

too, and leaped towards it.

Clara raised the vial of anti-plastic higher and flicked the stopper off, while taking a last step toward the vat. The Nestene Consciousness sizzled and spat, sending wafts of choking grey smoke through the basement. *This is what I should be doing with my life. Saving people.*

She raised her arm to spill the contents into the vat.

At that moment, the wolf lunged. For a second, Clara felt searing pain in her hand as its teeth tore her flesh. The vial was ripped from her hands. Blood gushed from the wound. Then, just as suddenly, everything reset. Her body returned to its chronolocked state and she was trapped again between one heartbeat and her last, her hand perfectly intact. She stared down at her hand, as a realisation hit her: the time loop could be a gift, not a curse.

Ashreld stepped up to the wolf with the axe in her hand. “Get off my planet!” she yelled, swinging the axe in a wide arc. Clara watched as the wolf’s head—sliced clean from its body—flew through the air with the vial still in its teeth. For a heart-stopping moment, she thought it would fall short, but it bounced on the rim and then plopped into the vat.

The plastic bubbled and erupted in a furious mass, rising high out of the tub. It roared a deep, chest-shaking roar. Clara grabbed Ashreld’s arm and backed away. The Orilien woman coughed and choked on dense fumes that hung in the air. The mountain of orange gloop slackened and collapsed

onto itself.

The vampire on the steps stuttered and failed, and then slowly tumbled downwards, inert plastic once more.

The Doctor frantically scanned the transmitter. “No. No!” he shouted, looking at Clara. “They’ve got two warp shunt vessels in orbit. It’s transmitted itself back there.” The transmission made a deafening burst of static, sending arcs of electricity flashing and crackling across its surface.

“Doctor, you better get away from that thing—” Clara warned.

“I need to find out where they went—”

A flash leapt from the transmitter to his hands and arced through his body. He looked up in surprise for a moment, and then crashed to the floor.

“No!” Clara made to fly to the Doctor’s side as he jerked and thrashed, but Ashreld held her back.

“No, wait,” Ashreld said. “Let me kill the power.” She quickly found a junction box and pulled a fuse. The crackling died.

“Doctor!” Clara put her hand to his chest. His hearts were still beating. She put her cheek close to his mouth. He was still breathing, but she caught a whiff of alcohol on his breath. Those specialist macrophages must have been zapped right out of his system.

He mumbled something Clara could only assume was in High Gallifreyan, and grinned stupidly at her.

“Help me,” she said to Ashreld. “We have to get him back to the TARDIS. I think he’ll be all right if he sleeps it off.”

Together, they coaxed the stumbling

Time Lord past the now waxwork-like vampire, up the steps, through the haunted house and out into the sunlight.

When they were almost at the TARDIS, one of the info-monitors flashed back into life. A bemused newscaster declared breaking news. “In a shocking development to today’s baffling events at FunWorld, the planned military response has been cancelled. There have been no further sightings at the park, and now there is speculation that this was a hoax organised on social media. Meanwhile, in other news—”

Ashreld sighed in relief. “Thank the gods. And thank you, Dinah and Doctor.”

Clara smiled and pushed open the TARDIS door. “Thank yourself. You stopped an invasion today. I’ve got it from here. You go home to Benj and Aerial.” Clara hugged Ashreld while the Doctor staggered into the TARDIS, wobbled, gripped the console and pushed a few buttons. “Where do you think you’re shunting off to, eh?” he said to the air. Clara watched Ashreld hurry away, and then closed the TARDIS door. “Can you track the Nestene?” she asked.

“Coordinates laid in.” He lurched and swayed, then mumbled, “My ‘ead’s killing me.”

Clara caught hold of his arm. “Yeah, I think you need to sleep this off. Your brain’s probably scrambled.”

She helped him to a step near the central dais where he flopped to the floor. “We did good,” he said. “But we need to track the Nestene and —”

Clara turned around to check the coor-

dinates he'd laid in. Two sets. One in the Orion Nebular. The second on Earth. London. 2005. She glanced back at him, feeling a lump in her throat.

"I dunno," he said, blearily. "You could come with me."

For a moment, she let herself dream of new adventures. Of running through time and space with the Doctor again. She'd give almost anything to have those times back. But, she knew it was impossible. She turned to him again. He'd slumped against the dais and was gently snoring.

She squatted in front of him. "That would be great, wouldn't it? But that's someone else's story now." She kissed him lightly on the forehead. "You go on. Be the Doctor again. You are going to be fantastic." She stood up and walked steadily across the console room. "I've got a job of my own."

Don't look back, Clara Oswald, she told herself. It was time to start going forwards. She sent the first set of coordinates in the Orion Nebulae to the Diner, and then deleted them from the TARDIS memory banks. Pausing only for a moment to scoop up the battered brown leather jacket, she walked out of the TARDIS. She slipped the jacket over her shoulders. It was stupidly big on her, and she fancied the crinkled old leather still smelled of stardust.

The universe needed the Doctor. It would always need a hero with a blue box and screwdriver to fix things; maybe now more than ever. But she had her own TARDIS, her own friends, and so did he. She proved, more than once, that she could be a good doctor, too.

Epilogue.

The Doctor woke, slumped on the console room floor. He shook his head. That vermilion brandy was heady stuff. His memory of yesterday was bleary. He remembered getting a shock, in a basement. He scratched his head for a moment. The Nestene! He paced to the console. He must have laid in coordinates before he passed out. So, the consciousness thought they could find a home on Earth in 2005, did they?

"We'll soon see about that," he muttered, and set the TARDIS in motion.

He tried to remember what else happened yesterday. Ohila had crashed in on him at the bar, leaving, what? He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a leather wallet. Flicking it open he read, 'The Doctor. Advice and Assistance Obtainable Immediately.'

"Psychic paper? Might come in useful, I suppose." He shrugged and shoved it back in his pocket.

As the TARDIS spun on towards Earth, he examined the remaining contents of his pockets. A vial of anti-plastic, presumably made by him, and a cranky-looking bomb, definitely *not* made by him, but still, it could come in handy. He thought there had been a woman, too. But his memory, fogged by alcohol and the jolt from the Nestene, wouldn't give up its secrets. That was okay. Time to move forward.

He tracked the Nestene to London and arrived on a spring evening. As he stepped out of the TARDIS, he took a deep breath of the cool air. It was a

long time since he'd been to Earth, but the air tasted, for a moment, of the past. Of the Brigadier and Bessie, of Sarah Jane and Jo Grant. Of old friends and old enemies, and the one he couldn't really put in either box. Who knew if any of their paths might cross again? The March air had a tang of the future, too; a wisp of "Who knows?" and "What's next?" floating on the breeze. Planet Earth. Perhaps it was the closest thing he had to home now. He shook his head at his own sentimentality and resolved to keep *that* thought to himself.

He marched through the London streets towards Henrick's Department store, past workers heading home, laughing, blissfully unaware of what's out there. Humans! They were just starting out on their faltering journey to the stars. Often ridiculous, but always amazing. He'd try to make the Nestene see reason and leave these people alone. But, if he couldn't, well, he'd have to do what he always did. Fight monsters, save people, and be the Doctor.



INTERVIEW

IN CONVERSATION WITH ONI DURANT

by Rik Moran

Oni Durant is the founder of Onezumi Events, which was crowdfunded from her strong internet following and is best known for producing the following major events in the United States.

- (Re)Generation Who: The Doctor Who Convention for Every Generation
- PotterVerse: Baltimore's Harry Potter Fan Convention
- Intervention: The Intersection of Sci Fi, Fantasy, and Future Media

Oni very kindly took a few minutes out of her busy schedule to answer some questions for us.

RM: Thanks very much for taking the time. I know you must be very busy with running 3 events and your regular life. How do you juggle it all?

OD: The first 5-7 years were brutal because it was all about working brought every interstitial moment. That means typing on my phone while walking to the bathroom at work, working through lunch, going straight home and working some more and only having 4-6 hours to sleep. It's maybe a little better now but it's pretty intense. Now I have more staff to help me so I've been able to delegate. That was huge.

RM: (Re)Generation Who is your Doctor Who event. What first drew you to the show and what made you want to run an event?

OD: When I was little I watched Tom Baker while my Dad was dying of cancer. He reminded me of my Dad. Cons helped me get through a lot so it was a natural thing for me to put this con out there to give back to the community that has always been there for me.

RM: What would you say are the necessary ingredients for a good convention?

OD: Aside from the usual guests, panels, and cosplay, a good point of view is essential. That's why my events go hard with customer service and kindness. We are all about social impact and not here to jack people for cash. Atmosphere.

RM: Is a good dealer's room essential?

OD: Definitely - the fans want it and it also helps local businesses. We curate ours so we don't have multiple people selling the same thing.

RM: What's the best thing you have found at a con?

OD: When I hear from a fan that my event gave them hope - or even saved their life. It happens a lot and it's why we do this.

RM: Lots of events now seem to be

becoming more like trade shows rather than what we would call traditional conventions. Is it a consequence of being the biggest con, or is being the biggest con dependent on having the best ties to the industry? I mean, I sincerely doubt that it's a coincidence most of the biggest nerd industry shows — SDCC, Anime Expo, E3 — are all in LA or nearby.

OD: The ones you are mentioning are corporate / industry run and they just have more money to put into it from the start. They are actually kind of industry trade shows. For example, many studios in LA make their actors go to SDCC as part of their contract for their film or TV series that is coming out. They are kind of a different type of event than a fan con. Fan cons are generally smaller boutique situations, but they don't need to remain super small. I personally prefer to keep my event at a manageable size so that I can remain focused on our community impact, but we could even get slightly larger and still feel like a con. We have me overseeing quality at my cons - some events don't have 1 person doing that. It doesn't mean any event is better or worse - it means they complement each other in the fan ecosystem.

RM: Celebrity guests are a big part of the convention circuit. Getting an autographed 8x10 or a selfie with the star of your favourite movie or television show is a huge draw for attendees. How do you select guests for your events?



OD: We try and get people who are relevant to the fandom - meaning we won't contract a Star Wars actor for a Doctor Who con. We aim for a balance of some from the modern era, some from classic, and a level of crew/production staff. If fans request someone of course we try and get that person. After we have who we'd like to have on a list we then start negotiating with their agents and trying to figure it if schedules work. It's a very long process.

RM: What's the secret formula for the perfect event?

OD: Spoiler: There isn't one. I feel our success is because I've remained engaged and vigilant regarding how we fit into and serve our community. The actors joke that I'm a "secret weapon". It's super difficult, but you gotta go all in on it. You really need to have great staff who place kindness as their most important value - we have that and we train that - that's another big deal for a

good atmosphere.

RM: What can you tell our readers about the next (Re)Generation Who?

OD: We should be launching registration in the next couple weeks since we are focusing on our Harry Potter convention (www.potterversecon.com) right now - so we may or may not be live by the time you publish this. Our most popular events like "Tea with the Doctor" and "Coffee with the Creators" where you get to actually eat and have longer conversations with the cast and crew generally sell out quickly - some within hours. So definitely keep an eye out for that. I'll announce the launch before it happens so everyone can have a chance at getting all of the tickets they want. Last year the Tea sold out in a couple hours.

RM: Oni, Thanks very much. Take care.

OD: Thank You!



REVIEW
DALEK
OCCUPATION
OF WINTER

Review by Anna Maloney

They say there are two things inevitable in this universe: death and taxes. Though, if you asked the Doctor, he'd likely add a third thing to that list – corruption.

Corruption and the Daleks go hand in hand, following them wherever they go. In most cases, it's very easy to blame the aberrant species entirely; that is not the case in David K. Barnes's *The Dalek Occupation of Winter*. Barnes delves into the oft more complex situations that would arise from such an unethical force being in charge of a civilisation. In this installment of *The Early Adventures*, we see the first Doctor, Steven Taylor (both Peter Purves), and Vicki Pallister (Maureen O'Brien), go against the Daleks again – though not in the way they expect.

The Doctor and his companions land on a planet devoid of life aside from a snowy city aptly named Winter. There is a celebration going on, which they learn as they move about is a graduation ceremony. The smartest residents of Winter are going to be sent to the research facility, including the brother of a local woman named Amala Vost (Shvorne Marks). Kenrik Vost (Matthew Jacobs-Morgan), we learn,

has been specifically chosen despite being caught cheating on his scientific exams – an early sign that what they are looking for isn't necessarily academic prowess.

The Doctor, Vicki, and Steven – the latter separated while they traversed the town market and now with Amala – watch the ceremony as it begins. The planet's leader, Gaius Majorian (Robert Daws), joined by the head of security Jacklyn Karna (Sara Powell), begin the announcements that precede the induction of the graduates. Majorian introduces the ambassador, a character who has been mentioned but not directly involved previously... and the three time-explorers stiffen in shock. The ambassador rolls up to the podium and announces, in a very familiar roboticised voice, that "The Daleks value friendship!" None of the Winter natives are at all put off by the Dalek's presence. In fact, they cheer as Majorian starts to call the names of the graduates. The Doctor, Vicki, and Steven are getting over their shock as Kenrik is called. But the man is frozen. When he finally acknowledges Majorian's voice, he faints. There's a small panic, and then the call is made: is anyone a doctor?

The Doctor and Vicki come to the stage upon the nearby Winter residents exclaiming that they'd heard Vicki refer to the renegade as 'Doctor.' He manages to revive Kenrik, who is quickly escorted to where the other graduates had gone. In the meantime, Karna and

Majorian become curious; they don't recognise them as members of the isolated population, and they are strangely apprehensive of the nearby ambassador. Sensing opportunity, Majorian invites them to his palace. In the meantime, Steven, who has gotten a job at Amala's insistence, learns from her what the Winter residents do: build Daleks. Hundreds a day, 10,000 a week... all without having a clue what the Daleks are capable of.

As the story progresses, it becomes apparent how corrupt Majorian and Karna are, how much control the Daleks have behind the scenes, and how uninformed and ignorantly happy the residents of Winter are. Amala at first won't believe Steven's assertion that the Daleks are cruel and readily capable of extreme violence, arguing that the Daleks never hurt her or her people. It is only when a Dalek threatens him that she realises there is some truth to what he's saying, pushing her to agree to break into the research facility in order to learn what's going on and save her brother. The Doctor and Vicki have had less success, with the Doctor barely escaping Karna's interrogation and Majorian throwing Vicki into the facility with the Daleks upon learning that she has information about them that could cause civil unrest.

Steven and Amala – with aid from the Doctor, who conveniently shows up when they need him for a distraction – manage to break into the research fa-

cility, where Vicki has already found Kenrik. The facility is where the Daleks grow food for the residents of Winter using artificial sunlight, but that is not the main purpose of the establishment. The building houses hundreds and hundreds of water tanks, all filled with violent green creatures. Home-grown Daleks, of which the graduates must put into the Dalek casings the Winter residents are creating every day. From the research facility, hundreds of thousands of Daleks leave to fight wars all across the Universe.

Using the information discovered in the facility, the renegades manage to turn the residents of Winter against the Daleks. The opportunistic and irrecoverably political Majorian turns on a dime from the opinion that he likes his life and shouldn't mess with the Daleks if they aren't hurting him specifically no matter how much harm they may be causing elsewhere to the more people-approved opinion that they must be destroyed. Everyone is convinced of their treachery except for Karna, who admires their power and slinks off to places temporarily unknown. The residents, with the help of the TARDIS team, arm up with Dalek guns from the factory and manage to beat them back into the safety of the research facility, where they stay hidden.

The TARDIS team leaves after Majorian orders they leave, threatening them with a Dalek gun. He asserts, in no uncertain terms, that he hasn't changed – all he cares about is that his people

glorify him and follow his example, whether it is in a pro-Dalek or anti-Dalek direction. The Doctor, Vicki, and Steven leave the planet uncertain of its future success; they are right to wonder, as Karna comes to Majorian and kills him immediately after revealing that she is on the side of the Daleks. Under no uncertain terms, we should be hearing from her again.

The Dalek Occupation of Winter offers a biting, Twilight Zone-esque moral commentary on the deep corruption possible in society. Majorian never kills anyone, acting on the surface level as a charismatic and well-loved leader for his people. However, it is made abundantly clear that he is very aware of the cruel, pointless conditions. It is illegal not to have a job, and thus illegal not to aid the Daleks – but they are not even aware of what the Daleks are capable of. It is a perfect example of the malevolence of compliance. Majorian knows the possible cruelty of the Daleks – he was told of how his ancestor made a deal with the Daleks to pretend to be friendly and grow them food in exchange for them happily building cases for them – but they have never been cruel to him directly, so he doesn't care to go against them. To Majorian, it is a selfish matter of circumstance; he only opposes them when they pose a real threat to his life. Majorian encapsulates the inherited sin of continuing the corruption of those before you, carrying a system you know to be wrong not out of outright malevolence but out of conven-

ience. People will be complacent with evil just to save their own skin and effort if what they see immediately seems to be good enough, bending over backwards to make excuses for their behaviour when they themselves are comfortable. Compliance is easier than rebellion, and Majorian views it in no uncertain terms: "We've sacrificed ourselves to evil... and now? Now there's no way of turning back. Can I get you a drink?"

It is made obvious how leaders like this will manage to stay on the top. Majorian, like others in his position have done, lies and turns the situation on its head just to save face as his sins are laid bare. Despite this, the people believe him. He tells them that he didn't know the cruelty of the Daleks, and in his haste and rush to betray them, the people see their glorious leader on their side, seemingly being genuine. Majorian has not changed, but instead changed the appearance of his stripes in order to keep the position he wants as leader.

While Majorian's two-faced nature is a definite factor to the Doctor's unsureness with the situation upon leaving, there is another oft ignored factor to such a rebellion that is addressed several times throughout the audio – the double-edged sword of causing such a revolution. The people are free from the Daleks, but they are not only thrust into war, their entire economy and social structure is upended, there is immediate unrest, and there is a loss

of what to do once the threat is removed. The residents of Winter ultimately relied entirely on the Daleks, and while it seems in the short run to be beneficial to be rid of such a corrupt leadership, the security and structure they provided has been violently removed. What will they do now? How will they survive without even the knowledge of how to grow food on their cold, inhospitable planet?

These questions are not solved, but they are left heavy in the air. The Doctor will never really know if everything is fixed unless he meets Karna again. It is difficult to get rid of such vast corruption – you can think you helped, but if you don't cut off every head, two more will grow in each place. Removing a corrupted leader from a position of power does not fix the system or the root cause of the leader's corruption. There is a feeling of inevitability, frustration, and hopelessness sprinkled throughout the audio, especially near the end. Ultimately, nothing is really fixed at all.

You feel the frustration of the Doctor and his companions as they deal with an unwilling populace, a masked foe, and a self-serving politician more concerned with public opinion than basic decency. The nature of man is to follow what is easy, regardless of whether or not it is right. Barnes' *The Dalek Occupation of Winter* masterfully portrays this innate flaw of man in a way that not only makes obvious its problems but manages not to suffocate the



listener with obvious and heavy diatribes. In Majorian's words: "I like my life, Doctor. It isn't perfect, but I've gotten used to it. And, so has everybody else."

[Listen to the trailer at Big Finish here](#)

[To buy from Big Finish click here](#)

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DOCTOR WHO SOLITAIRE STORY GAME

by Simon Cogan

[Doctor Who Solitaire Story Game \(DWSSG\)](#) is a FREE print and play solitaire paragraph-booklet adventure game where the player assumes the role of the intrepid Time Lord himself - the Doctor!

I've always been a fan of Doctor Who for as long as I can remember. I've been watching since the Jon Pertwee days back in the early 1970's and have never stopped.

I've also been a fan of boardgames ever since I was a child – from playing Monopoly and Cluedo with my family, through the roleplaying games of the 1980's, and into the more sophisticated hobby games of today.

Doctor Who has had its fair share of games of course, some more successful than others and some decidedly, well, crap! There have also been some very laudable role-playing games from FASA back in the 1980's to Cubicle 7's today.

But unlike many roleplaying genres which are 'ensemble shows' and where no one player dominates, Doctor Who as a gaming genre presents problems as one player, the Doctor, dominates the game with massively enhanced knowledge, attributes and

skills. As much as gaming companies have tried to get around this, it's a huge issue. This is why in board games such as the new GF9 'Time of the Daleks', everyone plays a different incarnation of the Doctor!

This is fine of course, but it doesn't actually represent 98% of what we see on TV, listen to with Big Finish or read about in the various novels. It's one Doctor plus his Companions, visiting exciting locations throughout time and fighting evil aliens.

"Evil is brewing somewhere in the Universe - perhaps an alien force is preparing to invade Earth, or maybe a rogue individual is conducting hideous experiments. In a new regeneration, you stand at the console of your TARDIS as it flies through the Time Vortex."

So I decided to combine my two greatest passions – Doctor Who and board games – and create my own Doctor Who game.

Due to the player taking the part of the Doctor, the game became a solo game. I also wanted to give players a real sense of creating their own episodes, as if they were seeing them on TV, so the game had to have a strong thematic and storytelling element to fulfil this aim

DWSSG began life in 2008 – almost 10 years ago! I started writing when the Tenth Doctor was still in the TARDIS

and had just said goodbye to Donna! By the time I had finished the first draft of the game, David Tennant had announced his departure and was adventuring on his own! In creating DWSSG I made the decision to think forwards rather than look back so initially all the content was based on the RTD Era of the show – with a few original bits and pieces from my own imagination. I even created an ‘ending’ for the game where the player would discover war-ravaged Gallifrey...way before The End of Time aired!

With the support of the BoardGameGeek community, which still hosts the game to this day, DWSSG took off and gained a steady momentum with a firm and faithful following. I am very proud of the fact that on BGG, DWSSG is ranked as the number one Doctor Who game! For the next four years or so, I wrote countless expansions for the game, venturing back into the Classic Era of the show, included Matt Smith’s first 2 seasons, as well as more original material. It was all very well received by the gaming community and for a time it almost became a commercially licensed App, but the BBC turned me down.

After nearly five years solidly writing the game, I needed a break and stepped away from the design. DWSSG continued to bubble away gaining more players and fans until last year when, looking back over what I had written, and seeing some fresh interest in the game, I decided to go back and do more. But I didn’t want to

just do more ‘add-ons’. If I was going to go back, I was going to go back BIG! So DWSSG ‘2nd Edition’ was conceived in the summer of 2017 and with the help of some loyal co-workers, we have created something which I think is very special. We have used the experience of writing the original DWSSG to create a more thorough rule set, enhanced and re-written a lot of the old content, expanded existing entries and introduced elements from the Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors that have never been seen before.

In addition, because we knew we could expand DWSSG2e before designing it, we could make the system far more fluid and cohesive than before. To this end, 2018 sees the release of no less than 12 monthly expansions collectively entitled ‘All of Time and Space’ that will cover all the TV Doctors from One to Twelve. The First Doctor expansion released a couple of weeks ago. The Second and Third Doctor releases are finished and I’m more than halfway through the Fourth Doctor, ready for April. DWSSG certainly does take a lot of my time!

So, what is DWSSG and how do you play it?

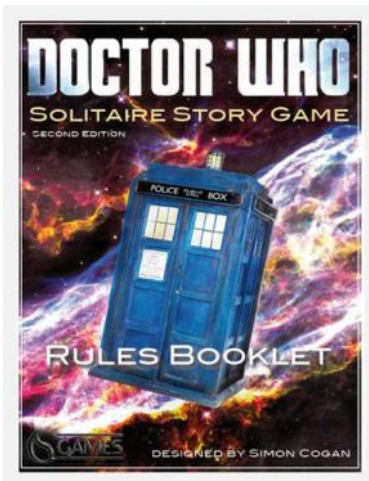
This web-published game is played using four booklets: Rules, Adventures, Enemies, and Events. Two normal dice are also required. All the Booklets, a Beginner’s Guide plus expansions and support materials are in the Files section of [the game’s BoardGameGeek page](#)

DOCTOR WHO SOLITAIRE STORY GAME

Review by Rik Moran

An Adventure begins when the TARDIS lands at an Adventure, be it modern-day London, the wilds of Sherwood Forest, or the distant planet of Raxacoricofallapatorius. Through Actions such as Explore and Investigate, references in the Adventure book will lead you to paragraphs in the Events book, allowing you to gather Allies and discover the plots that are in progress. Eventually you will reveal the Enemy, each of which has its own one page section in the Enemy book explaining how you might discover their dastardly Goal. New Actions then open up, allowing you to Plan, Research, and (hopefully) defeat the Enemy. If you fail to reveal and Defeat the Enemy within 12 Turns, the Doctor is killed - maybe your next regeneration will do better (or at least be better dressed)!

[Visit the game by clicking here](#)



(SC Games is a fan-based group which makes unofficial games purely as a labour of love. For DWSSG, all related characters, logos, and indicia of Doctor Who are copyright and trademark BBC and used without permission).

If you played the original 'Doctor Who: Solitaire Story Game' you can stop reading now and go and download this new edition. It's everything you've come to love from the original but streamlined together (no need to flip between five supplements for expansion rules) and given some new additions from the latest Capaldi series. If you're new however, read on.

The game makes you a new regeneration of the Doctor, able to choose your own personality quirks and skilful traits, then opens the doors to all of time and space and asks, 'Where do you want to go?' From your first starter adventure until your climactic finale, you are the Doctor and can decide exactly where you want to go and what you want to do. Want to experience earth's history? Prevent an apocalypse in the Present? Relax at an intergalactic resort in the future? You make the calls every step of the way, with an elegantly simple system that's incredibly easy to learn. You just decide the action you want to attempt; roll a die and maybe tweak it a bit if you've a skill or item that helps, then turn to the appropriate section to see what happens. It's really as simple as that! Yet somehow, the designer has managed to create a fantastic system that

leaves every world and time period with its own unique quirks and secrets to discover.

There's enough detail to prod my imagination into action, but enough abstraction to allow plenty of personal head canon. There's still a genuine sense of exploration. The designer (Simon Cogan) has mixed in original material with content from various aspects of the show. Yes, the story is emergent, but things happen for a reason, and if you revisit a place, it feels like you're revisiting. You'll create your own version of the Doctor Who universe and as adventures and regenerations stack up, it will feel like a 'real' fictional place.

There's far more narrative flexibility than a more traditional adventure book, and there is no hand-holding. DWSSG's threats mean something; it will kill you without even blinking. Ignominious and embarrassing deaths are inevitable. Your Doctors will die stupid and pointless deaths at least as often as they'll engage in heroic feats. So, when you pull some unlikely victory off, it's because you were genuinely clever/ lucky as hell and not because the game threw you a bone. There are no writers waiting to save you, only the cruelty of the Death Cubes.

From meeting fan-favourite characters to battling iconic villains, this game is truly a pleasure to play.

FORBIDDEN PLANET TARGET BOOK SIGNING

by Alex Wakeford

As the Western superstition goes, Friday the 13th is considered an 'unlucky' date.

It is supposed that, since the Middle Ages, people will refuse to get out of bed and go about their daily lives for fear of what might happen; millions will be lost by businesses due to some being too afraid to board a plane – they will cease to operate like ordinary, rational human beings.

Maybe there's a monster that feeds off the negative psychic energy generated by this day, that has gone back in time and caused this slow build of chaos on various Friday the 13ths in Western history in order to sustain itself.

It sounds almost like the set-up for a half-way decent Doctor Who episode, doesn't it? A nice, low budget one where it's uncertain whether there truly is a monster...

Well, the first of two Friday the 13ths has passed this year and there certainly was something out of the ordinary about this one – a kind of psychic energy, concentrated around the Forbidden Planet megastore in London. But it wasn't negative energy. Not at all! It was the collective rumble of a bunch of humans queuing up for several hours

to acquire some newly released books and meet the people who wrote them.

It was The Day of the Doctor Who Book Signing.



Once upon a time, before there were reruns and video tapes and DVDs and blu-ray and Netflix and other such arcane services, the way you'd get to experience a Doctor Who episode for the second time was by reading the novelisation.

On this Friday 13th, in April 2018, writers Steven Moffat, Russell T Davies, Jenny Colgan, James Goss, and Paul Cornell were in-attendance to sign copies of the newly released novel adaptations of City of Death, Rose, The Christmas Invasion, The Day of the Doctor, and Twice Upon A Time – their covers beautifully illustrated by Anthony Dry. This also happened to be the store's one hundredth Doctor Who signing.

And I was there.

I was there!

It still seems like something of a fever dream to me. I'm quite convinced that I'll wake up at some point and discover that the following events were entirely fictional – merely a product of my desires as both a writer and a Doctor Who fan, or perhaps that psychic energy I mentioned earlier has been wreaking its usual havoc on Friday the 13th.

What makes this a big deal for me is the fact that this was my first proper 'fan experience', as I have never been to any sort of convention or event before – to my shame – despite being a fan of Doctor Who since childhood (more on that later).



This was very much a 'fan meeting his heroes for the first time' kind of experience and it was absolutely spectacular! As such, I felt compelled to write about it – not just to chronicle such a memorable experience, but to convince myself that this was actually real. It's not just a story in my head. It happened!

It began, of course, with waiting in a queue (in the cold!) that must have rivalled the length of time the Doctor spent in his Confession Dial.

Because all the best stories involve time travel, let's jump forward in time from 5:15PM to 7:20PM (since there's no need to make you wait too!)

It was at this time that I was standing right outside the door, waiting to be admitted inside and internally struggling to keep my nerves under control. At this moment, it suddenly struck me that it would probably be a good idea to just run off. Just leg it!

Despite what I had mentally prepared to say, I was sure that the moment I walked in there and was face-to-face with the people I admired so much... I'd forget it all. I'd just say or do something embarrassing. I'd... fall over, or something.

That's how I'd be remembered.

Thankfully, that was far from what happened.

Instead, the moment I walked in, Russell T. Davies flirted – yes, flirted – with me!

"Hello," he grinned, with the energy of somebody who was greeting the first person in line, instead of the hundredth. I introduced myself and he asked "Have we met before?"

No, sadly, we had not.

"Ah," he said, punctuating with a wink, "I must've seen you in one of my dreams!"

And just like that, I knew this was all going to be fine.

I handed my phone over to the very helpful and patient staff member who was on-hand to take photos while the books were signed, asking him to just hammer the capture button in the hope that at least one of the photos would turn out well (he ended up taking about twenty pictures and many of them were).

From there, Russell and I discussed our entry into Doctor Who – of which, mine is a rather strange story...

I must've been about five or six years old when I caught Daleks – Invasion Earth: 2150 A.D. on the television, one of the films featuring Peter Cushing as Dr. Who (and Bernard Cribbins!)

It was this film which made me one of approximately four people in the universe who loved the 'Paradigm Daleks' introduced in Mark Gatiss' Victory of the Daleks.

From there, my next brush with Doctor Who was the 1996 film with Sylvester McCoy and Paul McGann. Dr. Who was wearing a very similar costume to Peter Cushing, but was no longer an old man with a moustache. No, instead he

was a tiny Scotsman, who was shot a few minutes into the film and he magically turned into a much younger man with lots of hair.

This all made sense to me.

Oh, and he wasn't fighting Daleks, but a snake who jumped into a sleeping man's body through his mouth (this was a very scary change in tone for Younger Me) and called himself The Master.

No, really, this definitely all made sense to me.

As I explained this progression to Russell, before arriving at his first series in 2005, I thought it would be a great idea to do my best and most camp impression of the Eric Roberts Master's line "I always dress for the occasion."

And that was my first interaction with Russell T. Davies.

Next up, Steven Moffat!

Now, I love all of Doctor Who. I really do. But, from my perspective, they still have yet to invent words that can articulate exactly what the Moffat era has meant to me over the last eight years and what it has helped me deal with.

That was, of course, a very helpful thing to be hindered by when it came to trying to tell that to the man himself.

As I shuffled over to him, I exhaled deeply and said "It's not every day you get to meet your literary hero!"

Steven emphatically gestured to Russell, "And you've just met him!"

No, you! I mean, yes, absolutely him too! But you! YOU!

There was one thing that I knew I wanted to say to Steven because of an old interview where he said that The Beast Below was "quite a mess...it was all over the place."

When I broached this subject to Steven, he upgraded his answer to (and I quote this word-for-word): "It was s***!"

From there, I was insistent to him about how much I loved that episode!

Not only did it so beautifully lay the foundations for his entire era, not only was it a brilliant thematic precursor to The Day of the Doctor, it was a deeply layered, political, and emotional episode that I hold as one of his finest works. Endlessly rewatchable, with some sublime performances from Matt Smith, Karen Gillan, and Sophie Okonedo.

You can trace the message of "Just be kind," that was so consciously at the heart of the Twelfth Doctor's era, right back to this story.

I don't think I managed to convince

Steven, but it won a huge grin from him as he said “Well, it’s what you think that really matters!”

We briefly discussed plans for the future. He and Mark Gatiss are known to be doing an adaptation of Dracula, but he also told me that more Target novelisations are on the way. He didn’t reveal which stories would be getting the adaptation treatment, but it seems we’ve not seen the last of Steven’s work on Doctor Who.

Given the limited amount of time we had (which was longer than I expected – I got about 3-4 minutes each with Russell and Steven), it was time to wrap up and move on, so I attempted to tell Steven just how much his Doctor Who stories have meant to me.

“Thank you, Steven. In so many ways, you were ‘my Doctor’.”

To my credit, I think that was quite a valiant on-the-spot effort to very concisely sum up how his era has helped me cope with anxiety and a lot of (presumably) non-alien invasion related nonsense!

In the moment, those were the words that came to me and they were exactly the words I wanted to say.

Somehow, and I’m sure this goes for many others too, it was always there exactly when I needed it. It would roll around at just the right time, and suddenly making it to the next weekend

was worth it – with my favourite Doctors and companions and monsters in stories I know I’ll carry with me through my own work to the grave (and beyond...)

On the next table sat Paul Cornell and Jenny Colgan, who penned the adaptations for *Twice Upon A Time* and *The Christmas Invasion*.

I had previously read Colgan’s story in *The Day She Saved The Doctor*, an anthology book featuring Sarah Jane, Rose, Clara, and Bill on various adventures with the Fourth, Ninth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Doctors.

Colgan penned *Rose and the Snow Window*, she did a truly wonderful job of capturing the incredibly driven compassion that defined Rose’s character. In many ways, it was through Rose, as it is with all of his companions, that this old Time Lord who ran away (re) learned how to live up to the promise of being The Doctor in the immediate wake of the Time War.

Embarrassingly, I asked Paul Cornell whether he was the co-writer for *Into The Dalek* (another favourite story of mine), but that was, in fact, Phil Ford. He clarified that he wrote *Human Nature* and *The Family of Blood* (as well as *Father’s Day*), all of which were absolutely brilliant and I wanted to make sure he knew it! He later commented to me on Twitter that he should’ve pretended to be Phil Ford and rolled with it!

I unfortunately missed James Goss, either because he had popped away for a moment or because I was just managing to keep myself from malfunctioning. But I did manage to acquire a signed poster from Anthony Dry, the artist behind the stunning covers for each of the books, and he wished me all the best.

Next thing I knew, I was out of the store, sitting down for dinner, still mentally processing everything that had happened.

This was my first proper 'fan experience' and it couldn't have been better.

I spent the rest of the evening in a state of uncontrollable glee, feeling closer to this show – this universe that collides with our own on certain Saturday evenings throughout the year – that I love than I ever had before.

In fact, as you read this now, whenever in the future that may be, I'm probably still grinning from ear-to-ear about this day.

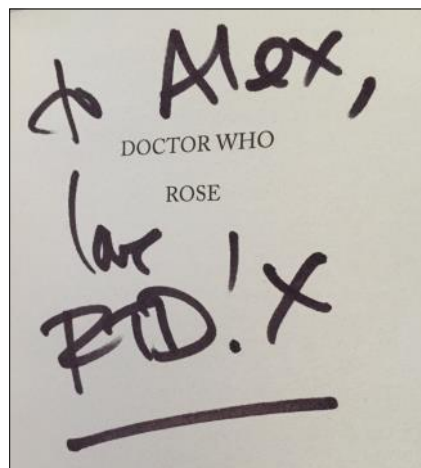
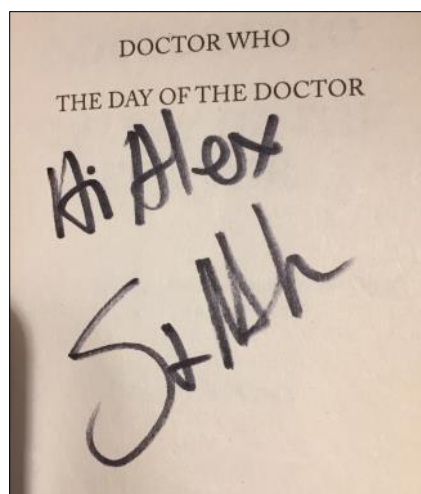
Having done this at the end of an era, my favourite era at that, a new one is about to start.

And that brings me back to Friday the 13th...

The Thirteenth is not unlucky at all, there was a complete absence of negative energy for an ambiguous monster

to feed on. No, this is not just the start of a new era with Jodie Whittaker and Chris Chibnall, but it felt like something of a new start for me as well, as a fan, having had such an enriching experience of the culture beyond the show.

It's a novelty that, like the image of a police telephone box settled on the alien sand while strange birds wheel in another sky, will never, ever wear thin.



REVIEW

HOUR OF THE CYBERMEN

Review by Anna Maloney

Hour of the Cybermen received positive reviews last issue. So what does Anna Maloney think...?

By now, you'd think the Cybermen had learned their lesson – there's only so many times you can attack Earth before you realise it's not a wise decision

In Andrew Smith's *Hour of the Cybermen* we see the triumphant return of David Banks as the Cyber Leader, casting his gaze once again upon the twin planet of his long-gone home-world. The second part of a UNIT trilogy, preceded by *The Heliix Rift*, this time we see Hopkins (Blake Harrison) and Price (Russ Bain) deal with what turns out to be a Cyberman attack years in the making.

Starting off by targeting another planet called Viridia, the Cybermen have invaded Earth by the time the Sixth Doctor (Colin Baker) is called by UNIT to help with a preternatural drought. However, unbeknownst to them, a Cyber ship is nestled directly below the control centre for their new space-scanning alien defence system, Cerberus. A system which, with the help of a double agent, contains the very weapon they intend to use on Earth in order to gain its subjugation.

Overall, it's a good story. It's pleasantly simple, easy to follow, and almost self-contained. The audio stands very well on its own – there's nothing really lost from not listening to its prequel aside from backstory on the UNIT crew. The plot moves well, the characters aid it without taking the focus away from the story, and the conflict is exactly what you'd want from a Cyberman story. As always, Colin Baker brings a charismatic personality and enjoyable energy to his role of the Sixth Doctor, accentuated by David Banks' captivating performance as the Cyber Leader. Not out of step at all since his last appearance, he brings a personality to the role, even if that role is someone who is emotionless.

Or, is mostly emotionless. This audio brings interesting attention to the fact that the Cybermen do, in fact, have some low level of emotion. A mostly throwaway line of Price's almost breaches the question of how far that drain of emotions goes: 'Cybermen might have no emotions. But have you noticed? They still scream when they die.'

It's an interesting thing to think about; in other parts of the audio, the Doctor irritates the Cyber Leader enough to have one of his subordinates restrain him. Elsewhere, the Doctor irritates him enough to see the Cyber Leader take on what appears to almost be anger, vowing to destroy him and members of UNIT despite that being a wasted opportunity for more cyber-

conversion candidates. The method of cyber-conversion is described in a fair amount of detail in the story, but a very interesting element of the procedure mentioned is the changing of brain chemistry. Riva went through the very beginnings of this part of the procedure, losing memories in the process. However, the Doctor helps her to regain them. That begs the question: how much of the process is permanent, and how thorough is it really? Are the Cybermen actually removing all their emotions, or are they just making them largely inaccessible? While this audio doesn't delve into the question of how emotionless the Cybermen really are, it does get the cogs rolling – even if Price's line was only stated after the satisfaction of saving himself from conversion.

Throughout the first third of the audio, it seems as though the Cybermen targeted Viridia before being led to Earth for some kind of revenge against a few Viridian soldiers. We learn the truth later – the Cybermen attacked Viridia before Earth as a test run, since Viridians have a similar biological makeup to humans – but that revelation was a bit of a disappointment to me. While it shows the great thought and determination that went into this plan, there's an over-focus of stories where the villain of the week targets Earth. Even when the Doctor is not stuck there, Earth seems to have a magnet for aliens with bad intentions.

There rarely seem to be stories where

Earth is not a helpless target for the umpteenth time, especially by staple villains like Daleks and Cybermen. It would add an interesting dynamic to the story if the Viridians had dragged Earth into combat during a desperate strike back without meaning to, ultimately leading the Cybermen to target Earth as well. A story for another audio, perhaps?

The Cybermen's plan in this audio was satisfying and well hinted at throughout the story itself. The introduction of elements – the drought, the Cerberus satellites, the dehydration effects, and ultimately cyber- is all well-paced and doesn't give away the plot all at once. It comes to the listener piece by piece, giving the tools to figure it out just a little bit before the Doctor does.

This story does noticeably well at hinting at what's to come too – there is a subtle clue shown later that would alert a sharp-eared listener to some human treachery that becomes apparent later on.

The Cybermen are portrayed well, due in no small part to David Banks' Cyber Leader. In a wonderful, suspenseful scene where Price is alone with the Cyber Leader and a Cyber Lieutenant, we get to see the creepy way the Cybermen view their actions.

The audio overall doesn't have an antagonist that is evil with a capital E so much as terrible circumstance and Earth's penchant to be targeted by

villains causing worldwide distress. While there's always an occasion for a villain that is evil just for the sake of evil, there is a deeper layer to stories where the villains don't think what they're doing is wrong for understandable reasons. After all, most people in pain or who could not feel anything would look at someone in grief and see it as a weakness.

Hour of the Cybermen is a satisfying, well-paced adventure with exactly the kind of Cybermen encounter a fan would be looking for. Featuring an interesting, terrifying weapon, distressing betrayals, satisfying twists, and emotionless attackers, Andrew Smith did a masterful job in portraying a Cyberman attack worthy of Kit Pedler.

[For the trailer click here](#)

[To buy from Big Finish click here](#)

[To buy from Amazon UK click here](#)



INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH JAMIE HILL

by Riley Chambers

Jamie Hill played some very memorable characters on the show, including The Mummy/The Foretold in the episode 'The Mummy on the Orient Express', the monk in 'Extremis', 'The Pyramid at the End of the World' and 'The Lie of the Land', as well as one of the Silence, an Ice Warrior, and a Mondasian Cyberman. Though Jamie has played some pretty iconic villains in recent Doctor Who history, he was also a manager at the Doctor Who Experience in Cardiff. My daughter and I were able to fly in from Texas to be able to attend the closing of the Doctor Who Experience and I met and was able to briefly chat with Jamie.

Riley: You have done quite a few episodes of Doctor Who as well as played some pretty cool characters. If you had to choose two of your best memories from your time on set, what would they be?

Jamie: oooo this is a tricky one! My favourite monster and episode would have to be the Foretold in the Mummy on the Orient Express. Everybody found the costume extremely creepy and realistic, which is always great when playing any monster/creature character. I had a conversation with Daisy Beaumont who played Maisie in the episode about the fish and chips

lunch, in full costume - which was quite funny looking back.

My other favourite time would have to be the filming of the Monk episodes in Series 10, I had the fantastic opportunity to go out to Tenerife to film some of the scenes at an abandoned estate, the scenery was amazing and the whole trip was great fun with all the crew and other actors.

Riley: Some Doctor Who fans might not have known that you were also a manager at the Doctor Who Experience in Cardiff. I was able to visit the Experience that last day it was open. I personally felt a multitude of emotions that day while visiting. I was just enamoured at being able to see all there is to see about Doctor Who. From the props to the costumes to meeting Nicholas Briggs, Russell T. Davies, and yourself. We have nothing like that in Texas. Which is why it will always be an "Experience" that I will never forget. But when my visit was over I was saddened. Saddened that unless they open back up, no one will get to see this collection all together again. When you heard the news that the Experience was closing its doors for good in Cardiff Bay, what was your thoughts on it?

Jamie: The Doctor Who Experience was a massive part of my life after leaving university. I started on a zero hour contract there in the shop, I really enjoyed the job and worked hard throughout my time there and eventu-

ally became Duty Manager, a massive reward and great feeling to be recognised.

All staff and visitors there were part of my overall experience throughout the 5 years, and I will always have very fond memories. When I heard it was closing, it was sad. But, it was always planned to be a 5 year project so I felt like I knew the time would come.

I learnt many skills from general retail and attraction skills to how to build a TARDIS, a great skill to have that I'm sure many would love! I have moved on from the experience into a new career, and aim to continue my monster/creature acting when I can (keep an eye on Good Omens next year!) but always have great memories when I walk past the old Doctor Who Experience building.

Riley: Well thank you so much for your time, your hospitality, and your all around generosity. You helped make a great trip even better.



THE LONDON FILM AND COMIC CON REPORT

by Matthew Rimmer

Large scale signing events are frequently 'knocked' by fans, so it is refreshing to receive a positive review. Matthew Rimmer talks about his visit to LFCC in the summer of 2018...

As I attended the final day of the three-day London Film and Comic Con 2018 at the Olympia London on Sunday 29th July 2018, my day beginning sat in a hotel breakfast room across from a family dressed as Aquaman and his kin! Social media had been abuzz for two days already with people delighted to have met big Doctor Who names Tom Baker on the Friday afternoon (his only appearance), Noel Clarke David Bradley and Colin Baker, Paul McGann, Peter Capaldi, Pearl Mackie and Ingrid Oliver who were attending on Saturday and Sunday. Sunday itself saw the Doctor Who ranks swelled by Christopher Eccleston making his first convention appearance—a big draw for Doctor Who fans like myself. Further Sunday Doctor Who guests included Bonnie Langford and Arthur Darvill, with Peter Davison only announced on the Friday and one David Tennant a surprise last minute addition announced mid-Saturday afternoon although by the time I tried to get a ticket for his signing, it was 'Sold Out'. Nevertheless, I was in the mood for a Doctor Who-filled extravaganza of a day.

Rain had punctured the heatwave upon arrival. A drenched queue of thousands snaked its way through the warehouse-like entrance of the Olympia. I've been to enough conventions over the past few years to know what to expect but I imagine first-time convention attendees may have found this a bit intimidating, especially if they had early photo shoots booked and certainly some young children were getting understandably fractious. Thankfully, the pace picked up once doors opened proper. From the sheer number of people, one was aware from the off that convention organisers Showmasters were here to make money from as many people as possible. I'd already made my peace with the extortionate pricing for certain guests; it was well documented in the media when a certain name was announced. The market has established these prices and Showmasters knows fans will cough up. I do not like this pricing structure but if you want to meet the guests, well, that's how they get you. LFCC is a vast, commercial entity catering to a broad range of fan bases and is world's away from smaller, more focused conventions like Who At Hoyalake which I'd attended the day before. That was a nice day of panels, autographs and photos in a small venue. The Olympia is a strange, multi-level labyrinth. I was truly never sure where I was within the building as a whole at any one time. Maps were dotted about but signage and staff are always in short supply at these large conventions - even decoration and advertising was minimal at this one.

My first photo shoot was with Matt Smith, who it turns out is "a fist bump guy" when I went to shake his hand as I said hello - a fist bump ensued. He is much cooler than me. It was a pleasure to meet him, albeit briefly and it was nice to see him compliment cosplayers as they took their turns which was a pattern replicated with guests through the day. It is surreal delight to see the Doctor standing there as an actual three-dimensional person!

With nine photo shoots booked in (and a furious bank balance), queuing became de rigueur for the majority of the day. In my downtime between shoots, I had some time to explore the various merchandise stalls, picking up some wonderful Doctor Who artwork from illustrator and designer Stuart Manning - and queuing for 35 minutes to buy the official brochure! It is something we excel at in the UK, even forming spontaneous queues for queues. This is where I must give the LFCC staff credit - at every photo area, the attending staff were doing their level best to get people in, keep lines flowing, morale up and accommodate clashes. I was increasingly stressed through the day as my three-way clash became four-way when Zachary Levi (from the TV series 'Chuck' and also 'Thor') was delayed in traffic, bumping my photo shoot with him to the afternoon slot which was delayed by half-an-hour by an oversubscribed photo shoot for David Tennant. And I appreciate scheduling must be a nightmare for such large conventions but putting

three Doctors' photo shoots up against each other rather than staggering them seemed a curious move. But we made it work and I got all of my nine booked photos done - just! I was exhausted by the time I rushed to end of Bonnie Langford's line - I wouldn't recommend booking nine photo shoots if you want a relaxed day! Top tip— plan your time carefully, be prepared for disappointment through cancellations and clashes and be patient and ready to queue!

To a person, the guests were lovely and kept their enthusiasm up to greet fans individually throughout what was a long day for them. They appreciated the fans' kind words about their work and what a fandom Doctor Who has! There was a real sense of camaraderie in those lines. Highlights included; getting to tell Christopher Eccleston I'd seen his talk in Manchester earlier this year; seeing the guests willing to do poses upon request - waving Sonic Screwdrivers and the like; and Peter Capaldi exuding a sense of otherworldly Doctor-ness especially with children. What a marvellous experience for children to meet their Doctors! And what a reminder of my own age to hear adults referring to Eccleston, Tennant and Capaldi as their "childhood Doctors"! It is a pleasure to see Christopher Eccleston finally reaping the rewards of fan admiration for his pivotal role in reviving Doctor Who in 2005. I'd met Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Paul McGann previously so they weren't on my hit list but it was pleasing to

hear numerous younger fans dashing off to meet them too.

I get very star-struck which is why photos suit me better than autographs as the chat window is smaller. I get tongue-tied and make rambling small talk instead of asking anything interesting. So I found myself rambling about work(?) to Ingrid Oliver and miscounting the number of Doctors I'd met that day when Steven Moffat asked - I said two, it was three... I hope my sincere thanks is enough to not come across as abrupt when my brain kicks in to abort the awkward small talk!

So overall? LFCC's is a money-making extravagance but that's how they get the guests. I ended up meeting 16 guests, nine with Doctor Who connections as I spied Jimmy Vee and Paul Kaye on my way I out post-Moffat. It's great to see people whose work means a lot to you in the flesh and meet them as actual people rather than characters. It feels like Doctor Who fandom is going through a bit of revival and renaissance at the moment, especially with Doctor Who on Twitch fresh in the memory and the arrival of the Thirteenth Doctor of which there were many cosplayers. Stuart Manning pointed out that the costume designer's work on the Thirteenth Doctor is very utilitarian in that elements of it can be extracted for comfortable fits for female and male cosplayers alike. There is a lot of love for all eras of Doctor Who and it was well-represented at LFCC. A work-like mindset was need-

ed to get through the photo shoots but the actual moments of getting the photos taken were worth it, as were the opportunities for extended chats that autographs provide and little moments through the day; for example, seeing David Bradley then later Matt Smith pass by smiling and saying hello to fans. You'll have probably seen the photos of various Doctors shaking hands doing the rounds on social media. It's nice to see they feel a connection.

All in all, whilst I prefer a more intimate venue and panels, I'm glad I went.



REVIEW
RED PLANETS
Review by James Bojaciuk

Red Planets is refreshing.

Perhaps that's a strange thing to say. This isn't a comedy, and it's certainly not a romp. It is sometimes chilling, and always tense. The characters are in danger. One is in a police state cell, one is in a dissolving city, and one is losing their identity. Hardly the place you'd call relaxing. But Una McCormack's *Red Planets* is refreshing in a very real way: it is a perfectly paced, perfectly structured story that uses its characters to their great effect.

Pacing is one of those phantom qualities it's difficult to speak about directly. People are sometimes quite sure pacing is good, or quite sure it's bad, but without quite the words to say why it's good or bad. It tends to come down to two things: 1) Is every moment of the story used to advance the plot or expand characterization? 2) Is the story actually going anywhere?

In *Red Planets*' case, the answer is yes to both. The story is well-structured. This is not phantom-ground. Good structure is easy to describe: imagine a child telling you a story. Their structure will be "this happened and then this happened and then this happened,"; there's no pay-off, or advancement. It is, literally, one thing after another. Good structure is "this happened because this happened, and this hap-

pened because those previous things happened, and because of all of that, this happened." It is this form of structure we see in *Red Planets*. Indeed, its structure is so complete that the story is set in motion almost the moment the audio begins, and concludes less than a minute before the end.

Una McCormack's dialogue is natural, engaging, and in-character. She has a real talent for riposte. This makes all of her structural choices, and talents, fly.

The technical aspects of *Red Planets*' writing are excellent, and it is truly refreshing to find yourself in the hands of a writer you can trust. This trust extends to the characterization.

One of the continuing issues in Seventh Doctor stories is that authors misunderstand Ace and the Doctor's relationship. They assume he is borderline abusive. That it is a mistake, but it is easily corrected. All you need to do is watch *Survival*. The Doctor is distracted, shuffling a million things at once, and loses the Ace up his sleeve as he gets overwhelmed. He allows himself to lose track of Ace because of the deep trust he has in her; indeed, he's training her to be his replacement. He trusts her as much as, if not more, than himself. Una McCormack's depiction of their relationship is perfect.

Ace is depicted as extremely competent, even when technology turns against her, and resolves the story on her own. This goes beyond the narrative, and into the structure of the au-

dio itself. Instead of a singular two-hour adventure where the cast freely interacts, we have – appropriately - a Russian nesting doll. The outer layer is the Doctor and Mel dealing with an uncertain, incorrect 2017. The inner layer is Ace in 1960s Berlin but built like a Companion Chronicle, being all but a two-hander play as Ace and another actor have an adventure without the Doctor. It's refreshing, and experimental.

Mel's character continues to be expanded upon. Though previous sets have had some outstanding (Fiesta of the Damned), excellent (The Blood Furnace), and good (Life of Crime) stories for Mel since re-joining the Doctor and Ace, they have all been positive and direct shows of who she is, and where she's come from. Red Planets shows us the negative. Who would Mel be if she came from a police state? This could easily be a 'Spock-in-a-Goatee' treatment of her. Instead, despite being someone who buys into the system, she is recognizably Mel. Her innocence is not a blank and colourless thing but, but a vibrant and positive character trait. More than that, however, we see her as competent. Seeing her help pilot the TARDIS is wonderful. Bonnie Langford does an outstanding job embodying this alternate Mel, and her performance of the anthem is chilling.

Perhaps the most surprising thing you can say about Red Planets is that it's a subtle character piece about the Doctor's morality.

Ever since The Aztecs, Doctor Who has operated under one all-encompassing rule of time: "But you can't rewrite history! Not one line! ...What you are trying to do is utterly impossible. I know, believe me, I know."

"Not one line" was the guiding ethos behind both the Hartnell historicals and more recent, wilder takes on either the historical or science fiction stories which happen to be set in the past. It is the narrative convenience necessary for the show to function without collapsing under the weight of continuity. If Barbara had succeeded in The Aztecs, the programme would need to then lay out the hundreds of new years of history for the Aztec empire, as well as their position in the modern world. This requires an amount of space even the modern programme lacks. A novel may carry that much content; a television series could not.

Despite this, the rule of time is challenged on grounds of morals. Sometimes on television (The Fires of Pompeii), and sometimes in the expanded universe (Lawrence Miles' Interference), but this occurs most often perhaps in fan discourse and storytelling. The argument is that by failing to change Earth's history, he is, at worst, complicit in the suffering he could have stopped. His lack of intervention is a moral failure. Especially as he seems to have no problem intervening in things outside of Earth.

Red Planets is a response to that argument. The writer examines the ramifications of changing time for what you think are the best of intentions. It exposes the cost of violating “not one line” - genocide on an unimaginable scale, blotting out generations in a blink. The path of some lives, close to the point the timeline changes, are only altered, not blotted out (though their choice in how they live their lives are violated). But further out, year upon year, those who should have been born aren't. They are effectively murdered. People from the previous, real universe are similarly reduced to being brief inventions of space and time. We see Mel immediately broken, memories stolen and history revised. It is chilling to see Mel begin to sing a Soviet anthem mere moments after being recognizably “our” Mel.

What of their replacements, the new inhabitants of the new timeline? Everyone's lives in this new timeline have a made-up quality, as Genevieve Gaunt explains in the interview. “[Two characters'] love was a brief invention of space and time.”

And then, the unpredictability. We see bad outcomes pile up on bad outcomes. Good outcomes would not make up for the genocide, but we see uncontrolled changes to history, spiraling to worse and worse outcomes.

Functional genocide. Violation of free will. Destabilization of travellers and their history/biodata. We begin to see

why the Time Lords hold this as the highest of crimes, and the Doctor himself adhered to “not one line.” There is no greater waste of life, or violation of personhood. The Doctor's resistance to change history—and only intervene at moments he seems to have always interfered - is not a moral failing, but a moral strength. He resists the easy answer because genocide with the best of intentions is still genocide.

Red Planets is a quiet defence of the Doctor's morality. All the better, it expands the universe by showing - not telling - the outcome of changing the timeline and the depths of depravity such action would require. The Doctor's moral horror at changing time matches the moral horror of those who declare he should meddle.

I would have loved for this story to be longer, and properly dig into the “new” Mel's history and what a Soviet Mel's relationship with the Doctor was like. It would be radically different from our Mel.

Overall, Red Planets is an excellent audio and one I highly recommend.

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THE DISPOSSESSED

Review by James Bojaciuk

The internet feasts on horror.

It is a roving, self-sustaining flare of campfire stories, urban legends, and latter-day superstition. Whispers down the lane include one-man hide and seek against a demon-filled doll, The Game of Knowledge played against a smiling man, and, of course, the inescapable Slenderman summonings.

And The Elevator Game.

Ostensibly, it's a ritual. Eye of newt and toe of frog for the information age. Performing it is simple. Co-opt an elevator car, press the prescribed buttons in the prescribed order, and avoid the dangers guarding it (including such threats as a young woman), until you've emerged in an "other world." In this case, the "other world" is nearly identical to our own, save for a red cross in the sky. It's impossible to imagine anyone follows the elevator choreography—dozens of steps, apparently imperilling themselves all the while, only to find a nearly identical world.

But it is popular. That has kept it alive on the internet for years, as it slowly grinds upwards in prominence.

There is something in the idea of finding any ordinary building and discovering it's the gateway to another world.

The idea that any elevators may take you somewhere wrong outclasses and outlives the ritual that spawned it.

Mark Morris' Doctor Who audio, *The Dispossessed*, picks up on these trends.

This isn't to suggest Mark Morris is copying *The Elevator Game*—or indulging in Doctor Who's magpie-like penchant for adapting ideas from other stories or mediums—but it is a sign of how deeply *The Dispossessed* reflects 2018.

For once, this is important. Not because *The Dispossessed* happened to be released in the now-current year of 2018, or that the audience may get some funhouse mirror fascination with the present's image, but because *The Dispossessed* is a spiritual sequel to *Paradise Towers*. There was another audio related to the serial in last year's Ace and Mel trilogy, John Dorney's *The High Price of Parking*. But despite the shared inspiration, they take that inspiration in radically different directions. Dorney took inspiration from *Paradise Towers*' colourful, light entertainment look at a dystopian version of something from middle or lower class life. Morris takes the tower. *Paradise Towers* criticized council estates in 1987; *The Dispossessed* is commentary on the twilight of their existence now.

The Doctor picks up strange energy readings from northern England. Alongside Ace and Mel, he departs to

investigate. Shortly we discover said council estate. It's contained in a pocket universe. It's almost wholly cut-off from the surrounding universe, and zombies prowl the building. Elsewhere, an alien has taken possession of a middle-aged woman's body and is bent on using her to enact her revenge.

From there, things continually fall from bad to worse to oh dear: the team is separated, the Doctor on the run from zombies through a maze, in the company of two humans and one alien, all with their own agenda. Ace and Mel flee from zombies onto the elevators, which have long since stopped returning their occupants. At least, not in the condition they left.

Ace and Mel's first stop?

A wasteland. The site of a long-ago battle. Great, black chunks of glass. Alien, and horrifying.

The wasteland neatly ties in with the state of the council estates. In 1987, they were seen as a broken system on the knife's edge of savagery. One push would be all it took. That push would be seen again and again in British fiction, from J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*, to our own *Paradise Towers* (incidentally, inspired by Ballard), to any given crime drama but often shown in particularly gritty and disused ways in *Prime Suspect*. In 2018, the system has, if not broken, then faded away and what remains seems both distant and uninhabited. This is nicely metaphorized by

Morris in two ways. First, that the building itself is sealed away, and also can only see an abandoned and eternally night version of the city from within. Second, that the elevator only takes a person to wastelands.

The wasteland is *The Dispossessed* central metaphor.

Outside the building: an imaginary neighbourhood that reflects desolation.

Inside the building: zombies, empty halls, and rooms.

Beyond the elevator: memories of battle planted in a desert.

This is the first audio in the Ace/Mel run to make significant use of McCoy, Langford, and Aldred's stellar chemistry. The first third of the audio virtually leaves them as the only actors. They make the most of it: the level of comfort and trust between the actors bleeds over into the characters. I hope future writers realize the good that comes from letting them have sustained, direct interaction. Aldred and Langford's team-up through the rest of the audio is equally as excellent. The cast's chemistry is outstanding, and the highlight of *The Dispossessed*. Jamie Anderson's chief talent as director, through all of his productions at Big Finish, is twofold. First, he allows his cast to experiment and play. Second, his knowledge of the cast lets them work and experiment productively.

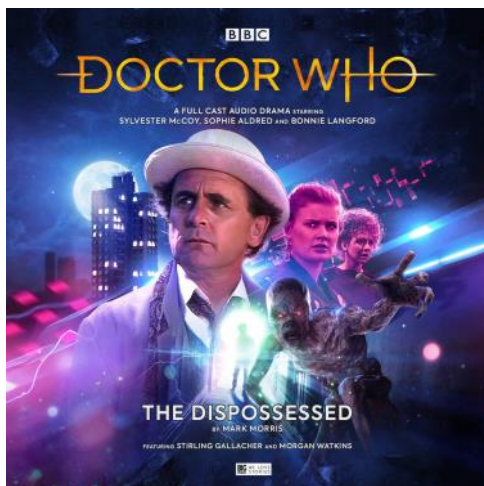
Everyone gives their all on an Anderson production.

Morris also has a strong sense of inter-audio continuity. In *The Blood Furnace*, the Doctor promises Ace to teach her the ins and outs of TARDIS piloting. We see the latest of their lessons here. The Ace/Mel audios have suffered from some uncertain continuity until now—including Sophie Aldred shifting between mid-20s Ace and teen Ace as she tried to peg when these audios took place (also solidified, now)—making this a welcome addition.

Creative writing is rewarded with the great sound design. This is why some of Big Finish's best recent design is found in their productions of Louise Jameson's scripts, *The Invention of Death*, or memorably, *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder*. *The Dispossessed* sound design, like the audio itself, is quietly excellent. The wasteland and the living building are striking.

Be sure to stick around after the credits. While the Big Finish interviews are often excellent, this one is memorable. Aldred and Langford perform a scene as six year old versions of themselves, and it is uproarious.

Outstanding cast chemistry, and a unique take on a classic Doctor Who story, makes *The Dispossessed* an excellent listen. If you've been doubtful about the Ace and Mel pairing, this is the second audio in a row that does well to convince you otherwise.



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Big Finish e-Magazine VORTEX



Big Finish publishes a regular e-magazine about the entire output of the business—including Doctor Who of course.

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REVIEW THE QUANTUM POSSIBILITY ENGINE

Review by James Bojaciuk

What if you could reprogram the solar system? What if you could make it run to your whim? Guy Adams story 'The Quantum Possibility Engine' digs into this, as it explores the manipulated and the manipulator.

Following on from 'Red Planets' and 'The Dispossessed', Mel has stolen the TARDIS. She has debts to cover from her days with Sabalom Glitz. These debts seemed resolved, but they weren't. In the intervening stretch of time, they have been bought by Josiah W. Dogbolter. All Mel wants is her contract to be signed-off so she can leave. Dogbolter on the other hand, wants the TARDIS.

The Quantum Possibility Engine reveals the planning that went into this trilogy with a structure that mirrors that of Una McCormack's Red Planets and Mark Morris' The Dispossessed. One character is separated from the others, and is ultimately their saviour. Each story focuses on what makes them unique, and their overall tone and history. Red Planets gives Ace the Cold War, espionage, and broken time in a story that emphasizes her competence and her humanity. The Dispossessed gives the Doctor a psychological look

into the aftermath of 1980s Britain, in a story that relies on him falling into the plans of others. The Quantum Possibility Engine gives Mel a comedy focused on the Doctor Who universe's underworld (criminal and political), as well as computers. In each case, the solo character gets to be the main hero. Ace prevents the Soviet future. The Doctor out-plots and over-powers the villain. Mel successfully reprograms the Solar System.

The structure across the three audios makes this one of the most cohesive trilogies in some time. Each story is essentially stand-alone. But they not only build on one another with the ongoing plot, but with their structure, theming, and approach. It's creatively done.

Guy Adams excels at characterization. But he seems to have a special relish for the seventh Doctor-era characters. There's never a line out of place or a doubtful moment. Adams is one of the few writers who seems to really have a handle on Ace's unique dialogue, the way that the seventh Doctor is crafty (far from the all-encompassing chess master), and the way that Mel is a goody-two-shoes (even as a traitor) without being one-note.

The characterisation of Dogbolter, who as well as being the principal villain also provides some comic relief, is at peace with an audio from nearly two decades ago, and comic stories from even earlier.

Meanwhile, Narvin again represents the Celestial Intervention Agency in this story. For a character who began as a minor, quasi-villainous foil for Romana and Leela in Gallifrey, Narvin has come a long way: as both an increasingly deep character and an increasingly popular fan-favourite. The further exploration of the early Narvin's character is excellent, and it's exciting to see him in a context where his competence comes to the forefront.

Ace, Mel, and Narvin are a companion team which holds significant promise and I hope we see Narvin significantly explored and developed as he travels with the Doctor and the others.

Although 'The Quantum Possibility Engine' is a continuity-heavy story Guy Adams' script remains crystal clear through the power of 'show, don't tell'. You don't need to know Josiah W. Dogbolter. You are immediately shown exactly who he is. You don't need to know Narvin, or what the CIA might be, you're shown who he is from the moment he arrives.

The characters are shown to us, and their motivations are clear. That's all the listener needs to navigate deep waters. Anyone passingly familiar to Doctor Who could listen to this audio, and enjoy it. It's the ideal way to handle extensive continuity and canon.

In many ways, 'The Quantum Possibility Machine' is a counterpoint to Ad-

ams' War Doctor story, 'Pretty Lies'. That audio was a brutal, sometimes darkly comic, deconstruction of mass-media war journalism. Sources cut-up to support a pre-determined message, people dying needlessly to support 'the story' (even the journalist), a distasteful business where the truth is the first causality. After all, as that reporter said, 'It's all in the editing.'

This present audio offers a counterpoint. The backing of mass-media journalism can't stand against honest people with cameras. As the Doctor says, "Wherever you are! Whoever you are! Point your camera at the sky! Watch them! See them! Because sometimes, to win a war, it's not guns you need. It's a camera. A camera and the truth."

Jamie Anderson is an excellent director. He's an actor's director, focused on casting and performances. An Anderson production is always guaranteed to have an engaged, excited performance from the cast. While all of the returning cast—including Seán Carlsen and Toby Longworth—are excellent, Jules de Jongh's performance as the Captain Regent of the Krasi deserves special recognition. It would be very easy to simply portray the character as two-faced and leave it at that, but de Jongh finds the character and truth behind that to present a compelling, united character. I would have loved to see her as an ongoing character. Hob also finds a voice actor at long last, Wayne Forester amusingly playing the Peter Lorre to Dog bolter's Sydney

Greenstreet. Golden Age Hollywood references delight me.

The Quantum Possibility Engine is what you point to when you say “Big Finish’s monthly range is exciting.” Sparkling and delightful, this is one of the essential 2018 audios.



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REVIEW REELTIME THE DOCTORS: VILLAINS

Review by John Lane

If you’re an old, lifelong Doctor Who fan like me, you’ll probably remember those ads in the pages of Doctor Who Magazine back in the day for a series of VHS tapes evocatively titled Myth Makers, by Reeltime Pictures. These videos featured conversations with all sorts of people involved with Who. Like me, you probably didn’t have the money for them, either. Or anything to watch them on, for that matter.

Happily, now we’re older, we have jobs and, if we’re lucky, disposable incomes, so these things are now accessible. Fortunately, a new series of DVDs from Koch Media is compiling lots of these interviews (plus newer ones) in a range called The Doctors, the latest of which, Villains!, arrived through my letterbox this week.

The focus of this particular collection, which I’ll assume you can guess from the title, features interviews with Ian Collier (Omega in Arc of Infinity, aka: ‘We’re in Amsterdam For Some Reason!’), Bernard Archard (Scarman in Pyramids of Mars), David Gooderson (Davros in Destiny of the Daleks), Peter Miles (the deliciously malevolent Nyder in Genesis of the Daleks) and Julian Glover (the spinach tagliatelle-headed

Scaroth in City of Death). Also included is a lovely tribute to Roger Delgado, the original Master, because, how could you not?

First things first, if you're going to watch any of these DVDs all the way through, you REALLY have to love Doctor Who, otherwise you might have a hard time listening to sometimes overly long stories about early days in the theatre or coping with Nicholas Briggs' jokes, bless him.

The Ian Collier feature is pretty interesting, especially as the man clearly loves the show and the interview is largely focused on his two experiences with Who, The Time Monster and Arc of Infinity, giving him a nice perspective on two very distinct eras. How Collier and Pertwee contrasted in terms of their relationship to sci-fi is just the kind of anecdote fans would be listening out for in a series like this.

When Collier talks about his personal life, and the consequences for his career in regard to one event in particular, is very much an eye-opener. It makes you think, if Collier actually had the power of Omega, some people might have found themselves squished by lurid blob monsters.

The interview with Bernard Archard is one of those that require some patience and, for me anyway, is perhaps the least interesting of all the features. It's sweet enough, but sort of like having afternoon tea with grandpa, where you just have to sit there and listen

with a fixed smile on your face until he briefly lights on something you want to hear. To be fair, this is the nature of a lot of these Reeltime interviews, which aren't just about Doctor Who but also the entire careers of those involved.

David Gooderson is an intelligent, erudite speaker, engaging and easy to listen to, and seemingly the nicest Davros you'd ever want to meet. In fact, looking at him in his armchair talking to the pleasantly open Robert Dick, you can easily picture him returning to Nu Who as a friendlier, more avuncular Davros from a parallel universe where the Kaleds weren't a bunch of space Nazis. How he actually became Davros is worth hearing. It's funny how the BBC used to work.

Gooderson's memory is very detailed and his experiences of wearing Davros' face and sitting in the twisted maniac's chair are nicely described. Again, what makes this a good feature is a strong Who focus over the general – after all, that's what most of us are forking out for – and Gooderson – who's done his fair share of conventions and therefore knows what we want to hear – doesn't disappoint.

As for Peter Miles, I sometimes feel it's not important what he says, just that he says it with that distinctively sinister voice of his. Of course, my view might be coloured by the different roles Miles has played in Who (a swine in Silurians, a swine in Invasion of the Dinosaurs and the apotheosis of swinery in Genesis), but I still can't

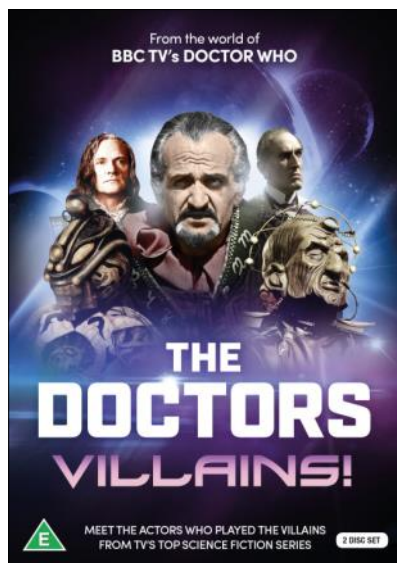
help expecting him to suddenly cosh you halfway through a story about a ham sandwich. Potential coshing aside, the man tells a good story – and he has a lot of them – as well as being a chilling pleasure to listen to. This interview is definitely one of the standouts of the DVD, full of ‘whonecdotes’ and worth it just for what Miles has to say about ‘Allo ‘Allo!.

The first half of the 50-minute Julian Glover interview is basically a summary of a life in acting which might prove interesting to aspiring actors. It was interesting to hear what this accomplished thespian had to say about working with Douglas Camfield from that perspective. Probably the most fun part of the interview is when Glover talks about his role as Scaroth, although ‘fun’ is perhaps pushing it. Glover isn’t exactly a giggle a minute and the interview as a whole is maybe rather dry. Still, to quote the 13th Doctor, “On the plus side, I now feel very well informed.”

While the tribute to Roger Delgado is the first feature on Villains, I think you have to save the best till last. We classic Who fans love the comfort of the familiar so you’ll be pleased to know there’s absolutely nothing here that you haven’t heard many, many times before. But it doesn’t matter. The tribute plays like a beloved melody, with popular verses sung by all your old favourites: Pertwee, Courtney, Levene, Letts and more. Some verses are even repeated within the actual tribute!

But, again, it does not matter. The feature is a beautiful homage to the best Master of them all, funny, moving, sad... a greatest hits of Delgado-related anecdotes that you won’t mind listening to again and again. In fact, I would have made this the final feature of the set... AS WELL AS THE FIRST!

All in all, Villains is a fairly enjoyable five hours of Whophemera though perhaps it’s a good idea not to watch all five hours in one go. If I have any criticism, some interviews could be edited down, but it’s a small, niggling criticism really, because in the end the entire series, Villains being no exception, basically works as an intimate chat with a friend. My advice? Crack out the tea and chocolate biscuits and enjoy a good old chinwag you can occasionally fast-forward.



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FICTION
**REUNION OF
THE RANI**
by Neil Davies

In the beginning we welcomed her arrival as a sign of great things to come, all of our prophecies spoke of a wise goddess from the stars who will descend to our world to create a living paradise. So when she appeared our hearts sang with joy, our priests offered up prayers of thanks and warriors built great fires on the beach to mark the occasion.

All the talk was of miracles, rebirth, new opportunities for all and great wealth. She was clearly a special being, an angel, someone of great knowledge far beyond that of our wisest sages.

When she asked for young people to be supplied for 'experiments' we did not question it, even when they didn't return. When she asked for her own private island that no one could visit under pain of death, we accepted it. When she insisted that all healthy males and females be fitted with special bio-chips we raised no objections.

When strange new diseases afflicted certain peoples causing them to go mad and kill each other, we saw it as a test, our goddess was testing us to see if we were worthy of her benediction, after all what else do gods and goddess do but make sport with mortals?

But then came her pronouncement that soon our world would end, and only a few of us, a select few, would be allowed to survive. Then we worried, we doubted, we objected. I objected I spoke out in anger, that was when I truly discovered the nature of our goddess and that she wasn't a goddess at all.

The all-encompassing hum came from everywhere, everything in the console room was linked, homogenised, it pulsed in synch. Bach busied himself inputting data and didn't look up as the mistress approached him, aware of her intimidating gaze, her ravishing beauty and her penetrating intelligence. He felt humble in her presence, a mere slave, an underling.

When she touched him he didn't flinch but inwardly he felt a mix of terror and arousal. She was as mysterious as her machine, he understood neither. She had trained him, taught him various skills to make him more useful to her but he didn't know why. Why choose him when there were others far more gifted and wiser, he was but a mere villager, a peasant or so he'd always thought.

"We're almost there," the words sang in his ear soft and caressing. Bach blinked, almost where?

"I've done as you instructed mistress," the words and figures were meaningless.

Smiling she moved into his line of vision, "Are you afraid of me Bach?"

"Of course, who wouldn't be afraid of

anyone with your powers?" He found he was trembling, he still couldn't make eye contact; he'd seen what happened to those who tried.

"Powers," she drank in the word as if enjoying it, "Oh of course you still believe in magic don't you, in the superstitions of the before-time."

The laughter was sharp and mocking, then his chin was fingered and pushed upwards, "Look at me Bach." There was little choice but to obey, one did not defy the Mistress. He gazed into the brilliant green eyes, took in the high-cheekbones, the sensuous lips, the haughty imperious angle of the head and the lustrous chestnut brown curls.

"Tell me what you see," she urged.

"A goddess, a superior being, a star traveller," Bach gave the usual answers, the expected replies. "You are the Mistress, she who must be obeyed, giver of discipline and pain; the supreme mother."

Scorn painted itself across the classically beautiful face as she let go of his chin and tickled his cheek with her fingertips, "You know my name and yet you never use it," she said, "Why is that?"

"Your name is sacred, Mistress it is only to be spoken in silent prayer with reverence."

The chin rose and from the lips came a sound that was neither pleased nor respectful, "I didn't bring you here to be a spineless sycophant Bach; to repeat the idiotic dogma of your mindless people. You have been educated,

upgraded and improved by surgery and drugs at no little expense so don't disappoint me with clichés. Who am I, what is my name; I permit you to speak it as you would any other name as you would your own."

Terror rooted him in place, to do as ordered would be to fly in the face of a thousand years of sacred teachings, yet one could not defy a goddess for was it not such a being who created the home world in the face place and gave it the holy name Miasimia Gorla – land of the sacred feminine.

His lips formed the first letter but he couldn't get his tongue to release it.

"Come on Bach, you can do it," he was urged as a nail found his top lip, "Try harder."

"RRRRRaaa," he gasped then lost his nerve.

"That's it, four letters, two syllables, it isn't hard even for a primitive tongue like yours, now speak it."

"RRRRaaaannnni," he spluttered, "Rani," there he'd said it done the unthinkable, blasphemed; he felt only shame but also an odd sense of euphoria for he was the first and only one of his people to speak this name aloud.

"Rani," repeated the mistress, "That's who I am, how I am known to my people. Who are my people?" She moved the nail to an ear, "Well?"

Gods he wanted to say, sacred celestial beings but she had taught him another term, "Time....Lords."

"Yes Bach that's right the Time Lords,"

She seemed pleased with him at last. "Smug, sanctimonious, self-righteous guardians of a pious, outdated philosophy that I rejected a long time ago."

He was confused by her bitterness; it was as if the Mistress despised her own kind, the other gods and goddesses.

"Rejected," he echoed in confusion.

"Utterly," and the green eyes flashed with cold fury.

"But they are divine," he said.

The nail cut his earlobe, "Oh they are far from that Bach," the Rani sneered.

"Advanced yes, clever certainly, devious beyond doubt but not divine. They are mortal beings like you and your people, just more advanced; and like your people they can suffer and die," the Rani contemplated these words, "Suffer and die," she repeated thoughtfully seeming to enjoy the images conjured in her mind. "Which they will in great numbers screaming my name in impotent rage."

He was appalled. Now the Rani was blaspheming; she spoke of attacking the most-high themselves.

"No mistress we cannot, dare not."

The nail cut him again jabbing in hard like a knife, "I dare do many things Bach, I dare defy any law and those who make that law, I dare defy the high council of the time lords and all their offices. I shall bring them down and humble them. And your people will help me, your world will be the source of my revenge."

He didn't understand but then, how could he? She spoke of things outside his experience.

"My world," he muttered, "Miasimia Goria? But it is small, backward, of no consequence have you not said so, many times yourself?"

The Rani chuckled; letting go of him she went over to a wall of her machine which resembled a tall mirror. When she waved a hand, an image of Bach's planet appeared; an orange sphere with light blue clouds, the continents compact and circular, the oceans long strings of tepid water. "How beautiful it looks from up here," he thought, "even mysterious."

"I didn't come here by accident Bach, nor did I choose your world at random; I came to it because it contains just what I am looking for – the elements of my revenge over the Time Lords."

Touching the scar over his left eye (it still hurt) Bach joined the mistress to peer down at the place of his birth, how exotic it seemed, how amazing. Yet in a way it seemed so dull to him now.

"Is this why you perform the operations on us, on me," he asked?

Turning, the Rani reached out to touch the scar over his eye herself, "Before I came you had no idea of how valuable the hormone in your pituitary gland is; once it is removed, refined, genetically modified and added to other compounds of my creation."

"You told me once it was an elixir but I never did understand. An elixir for what?"

Chuckling the Rani let her hand stray to Bach's hair, "You might as well know now, that I've enhanced you to the point where you can just grasp

basic scientific principle. Your hormone is the means by which I shall avenge myself on the Time Lords, because to them it constitutes disaster, despair, a divorce from the energies they believe they command."

Bach shrugged. He couldn't grasp her meaning, "A poison," he said hopefully?

"Much more," came the sigh, "A great deal more."

"But they are not here: you told me they were in another galaxy another time."

"Just keep your eye on the viewer."

He did as he was told, while she went over to the central console and worked rapidly.

As he watched, Bach saw his world vanish. It happened without warning, in an instant, imploding into a spiralling tunnel of many coloured rings. Had it been destroyed? He didn't think so – the Rani's ship was moving. It had entered a slipstream of violent unfathomable currents.

"Another galaxy, another time," she echoed his words back at him, "But such things are no obstacle to me not in this... craft, and they are no obstacle to you either Bach; you're coming with me, a witness perhaps; or maybe just someone to whom I can gloat afterwards."

His gaze moved to the banks of tiny test tubes racked on one side of the console room, each tube contained a small amount of a milky liquid. He knew that some of it came from him, most from others, not all of whom had survived the extraction. He thought of

one who had,

"May I ask a favour Rani?"

"To see your wife? Why not?" An inner door opened leading to another part of the ship; a ship without any physical limits, it seemed to him.

Mona lay in what the Rani had called an isolation ward, essentially a bed with sensory equipment built into it, that monitored her feeble life signs; His gaze moved from the tiny LED screens to Mona's pale features. Younger than him she looked older, her youth and vitality stolen it seemed; diminished by what she'd been through.

The eyelids flickered open as he drew nearer, and the cracked lips smiled when he kissed her.

"Hello my love," he said, "I told you I would never leave you; that whatever 'She' did to you I'd be here. Her ship has left our world. Don't ask me to try and explain it but we're going to another world; the place where she comes from, to meet her people; meet them and destroy them. What she took from us has been turned into a curse, a plague that will be visited upon others."

Mona tried to speak but even creating words was too much of an effort. A single tear ran down her cheek. From his pocket, Bach took one of the test tubes that he'd stolen from the console room, it was only half full. There was plenty of room to add something to it.

"Our time will come Mona, our revenge is very near now," he rested his head on her stomach and thought of

the children they would never have.

She was ever defiant and spiteful. My favourite student. The scorn she felt for others often bubbled to the surface and erupted in the form of harsh words, insults and once or twice in violent attacks. Brilliant but fatally flawed she represented all that is best and worst in the people of Gallifrey. On the one hand she was cool and measured, detached and pitiless but on the other she burned with ambition; ready to trample on all who stood in her way.

I tried to calm her of course; to temper that brilliant mind with compassion but it rarely worked, and in the end, it failed totally. She began to see herself as better than me; better than any of her tutors. We held her back she said, I most of all with my simpering weakness, my care for others. She felt stifled by the very rules I saw as vital to maintain a balanced psyche and so in the end she defied me utterly – she began to experiment on other students against their will.

The results were catastrophic and are too well recorded to repeat here, there was madness, illness and yes even death. My student displayed no remorse and not even that much interest. Such things are to be expected she said. They were inevitable, part of the learning process.

Of course I couldn't let her continue. She was a menace, a threat to all I held dear. So regretfully I reported her to my superiors, there was little choice. I knew what the consequences would be, or I thought I did, but they were

more shocking than I could have anticipated and ultimately led my death, a violent and painful death at that. I was poisoned in my own home in my own bed and as I lay dying, screaming and helpless she looked down upon me with a mocking smile and told me what she really thought of me, of all Time Lords, of Gallifrey.

It was, she said. time to move on, to break free of our pathetic cowardice. She left that very night, stole a capsule and departed setting fire to the Academy itself.

And so, I died. But as a Time Lord, death isn't the end. For us death is no blessed release – we go on, as so do our regrets; the Rani being perhaps my biggest.

It was a circular, blank, black hole in space through which no stars could be seen, no suns or dust, just total nothingness. Could that be where the Mistress came from?

"Transduction barrier," The words just bewildered Bach, "It keeps Gallifrey several seconds out of phase with the rest of the universe and thus provides an excellent barrier. You see, my people have mastered time, or so they believe. They move freely through it back and forth even sideways."

The Rani seemed almost proud as she spoke these words, but even in the pride there was an ironic scorn, a dismissive contempt.

"Have we also moved through time Mistress?"

"Yes Bach, not too far forward just enough to ensure that most people

have forgotten me - at least the ones who matter. I left under something of cloud, you see; there was a scandal, a fire and a death."

Having seen many deaths, Bach was not surprised, death followed this woman around. She wore it like a badge of honour.

He saw a pulse of brilliant light pierce the lower hemisphere of the blackness, just a pinprick but it excited the Mistress. "Our way in," she breathed using the remote control strapped to her left wrist to manoeuvre the ship. "A little flaw in the barrier that I modified just before leaving. I didn't think Barrier-Control would notice it, and they haven't. Now I just need to read-just the entry coordinates to take me to where I need to be." She eyed Bach, "Grab a pallet of test tubes and a volatiser."

As he was doing this a question occurred, "Won't your people have some kind of security? Surely they will realise that their barrier has been penetrated."

Rani's look was one of new respect. "Very good Bach," she patronised. "You're improving, that last operation on your pre-frontal lobe was a glorious success." She considered what he'd said. "The Chancery Guards have their uses but they're pathetically slow to respond. By the time they do, we'll be long gone. I don't intend to linger, well not much." The laugh was the familiar cruel bray, which chilled Bach to the core.

They emerged into a long room, the likes of which Bach had never seen before; with its wood panelling, Corinthian columns, glass sculptures and shelves of ancient untitled books. There was a long table, at the end of which sat an elderly man in a high collared aquamarine robe. He looked almost priestly. Dozing, he didn't respond as the Rani and Bach approached the table. She gave a snort of derision.

"Look at him," she spat, "You wouldn't believe that this is the leader of the Time Lords, would you?"

Bach could only agree. "You know him Mistress?"

"His name is Tarn, he used to be my mentor at the academy, then he became my lover and finally my husband. Now he is Lord President of the High Council. Funny, last time I saw him he was dying."

Ignoring Bach's bewilderment, the Rani moved over to Tarn and very gently ran her fingers through his thinning grey hair. Bach found it hard to believe the Rani had ever loved anyone other than herself, let alone married someone.

"You still have feelings for this man," he asked?

The expression hardened into contempt, but in the eyes, there was a curious emotion, perhaps not love or even liking but an odd remnant of nostalgia.

"He's part of my old life as a student here - and I was a brilliant student, top of my year - and it was a very impressive year, let me tell you."

"What where you a student of mistress, if I may ask?"

"Yes you can ask," Rani snapped then seemed to reconsider, "The sciences were my specialism, bio-chemistry, surgery, genetics – do you understand what I'm saying?" she asked, "No I don't suppose you do."

Tarn moved his head and let out a low moan, he seemed old and tired to Bach; weighed down by whatever responsibilities he now had.

"Are you going to kill him?" the slave asked.

"I'm going to kill all of them," she spat.

"You would murder your own people?" Bach couldn't hide his revulsion.

"Don't get sentimental on me Bach, I've waited a long time for this - but first," gripping Tarn by the chin she yanked his head upright waking him immediately. The sleepy eyes registered first surprise then outrage and finally terror.

"You," the old man croaked and seemed to shrink into his chair.

"I'm flattered by the speed of your recall, no post-regenerative fogging I see."

He's not likely to forget his ex-wife, the woman who murdered him thought Bach.

"How did you..." Tarn began then swallowed the question, "Why are you here, why come back?"

She looked up at the portraits of past presidents, shaking her head.

"Look at them Bach the great and the good, the spiritual and political leaders of this world since the day it conquered time; regarded as heroes and

saviours," she spat the last few words as her gaze dipped to Tarn. "Masters of paralysis, kings of complacency, spineless, hopeless, lacking in any kind of vision. And here," she sighed, "is the latest of them, a man who grew to fear his own protégée even when she shared his bed."

For the first time since awakening, Tarn sat upright in his chair, a little steel entering his spine a hint of pride triggered no doubt by these insults.

"We Time Lords are an ancient and proud race but we have from time to time produced some foul mutations some truly sick minds. You my dear ex-wife are one of them. You may be interested to know that the Chancery Guards are on their way. In your absence you were tried and found guilty of several crimes including my murder."

This didn't seem to bother the Rani at all. Indeed. her own back straightened, "What are you going to do, send me to Shada? Or is it to be particle dissemination?" The words were rich with contempt. "By the time your guards break in here - and they will have to break in husband; I've bonded the door shut at the molecular level; by the time they find you, you will be dead and soon after that they will start to die; they and many others."

She clicked her fingers. Bach took a test tube from the bag he was carrying and brought it over. Rani gestured for him to remove the stopper. The tube seemed unusually full and some of its contents splashed onto her fingers as he passed it to her. She didn't react,

knowing that she was immune to the chemical weapon she had developed, to use on her own people.

"Goodbye husband," she said, "Consider this our decree absolute, if you like." She brought the tube around for Tarn to see, "The contents of this small vessel will render the Time Lords unable to regenerate. Without that ability, their lives will be shortened considerably. But it gets worse for them. Should they try to travel in time they will find themselves no longer protected from the flux and flow of the Vortex even inside a TARDIS. They will simply age to death."

Bach didn't doubt these words, too many of his own people had suffered in the concoction of this evil brew including himself. From the expression of horror on his face, neither did Tarn. "Mistress," said Bach, "wait."

She looked at him aghast. Never before had he attempted to give her instructions. He was her tame little pet, her personal slave; he did as he was told; what his upgrades would allow.

"Some of the elixir has fallen on you," said Bach.

"So?" The Rani's tone was withering, "I am immune."

"Not from the tears of sorrow, mistress, as wept by my wife. As you so often told me the tears of my people contain another element against which even you have no defence. Oh how many tears we have shed in your name, an ocean of despair, from which until now you have been free."

The Rani glared at her hand. The flesh was discolouring, scaling, bulging; the

nails turning black, the fingers becoming arthritic. The Rani screamed, throwing the test tube aside in horror as her hand, her whole arm went into spasm. She roared and swung around on Bach, realising that she had been betrayed, a weapon in her other hand. She fired.

But the lethal beam failed to materialise. Bach did not die. His body did not glow or melt.

Tarn chuckled, "This is the office of the Lord President my dear wife; no weapon can be discharged in here not even one of ours."

Her hand now a swollen, disfigured claw, dark veins of infection climbing up her wrist, the Rani let out a shriek. She staggered towards Bach but he retreated, keeping the other test tubes out of her reach.

The Rani's arm began to swell and disfigure. The antidote, she must have the antidote. She dashed back into her TARDIS and sealed the door, giving no more thought to Bach, her ex-husband, nor Gallifrey. Her only concern now was survival. She was being destroyed at the DNA level. Genetic decay was occurring at an accelerated rate, regeneration only 40% probable; death was the most likely outcome; oblivion.

"No," she raged, "it can't end here, not like this, there's still so much to do." Going to the central console she slammed her one good hand on the telepathic circuit. There had to be a

solution, a way out - and maybe her TARDIS could supply it.

Words flashed up, they were blurred until she blinked her eyes clear.

'DNA infusion required from another Time Lord.'

"Which one?" the Rani raged. "Give me a name."

'Only two possible matches exist,' replied her ship.

"Tell me who they are and where they are," the Rani demanded.

The choices came up. Oh how ironic.

The Master. Or, The Doctor.



REVIEW

ROAD TO THE 13TH DOCTOR

Review by Rik Moran

In the build up to the Thirteenth Doctor, prior to series 11, it was a good idea for Titan to release these little prequels of sorts. And very good they have been thus far, and this is no exception..

James Peaty captures the characters perfectly with his writing of the Tulpa story. I could hear the words on the page being spoken in my head so clearly. Combined with Brian Williamson's art work and this is an joyful little adventure.

The next part of 'The Road to' is written by Jody Houser and is drawn by Rachael Stott who is fast becoming one of my favourite artists. Her work is exquisite.

I can thoroughly recommend that you pick this up and give it a read. You won't be sorry.



[Visit the range at Titan Comics here](#)

FICTION
THE MOMENT
by Stephen Hatcher

Such little lives, full of disappointment and futility. For the soldier, that was the word that summed up human existence – futility. And he had the power to change that – at least for some of them. He could end their futile existence and give their deaths, if not their lives a little meaning. At least by surrendering themselves to him, they awarded themselves some posthumous purpose. They fed him, nourished him, made him strong.

The soldier had killed before, of course. It was a part of the job. The first time had been in Aden. Ordinary people, decent people, old men and kids, not wanting anything more than a chance to have a say in how things were run in their own land – and he had been sent to help sort them out, to put them back in their place, to kill for Queen and country.

As he waited in the store room, he reflected on how he had come to this point. He knew he would never forget that first time, that moment when one insurgent fighter had taken one risk too many, one step too far forward, one step that had brought him into the soldier's line of sight. It hadn't been personal, this was the enemy. Kill or be killed – if not himself, then his mates. He didn't hesitate. He squeezed the trigger and ended a life. It was only later that he had discovered that his victim had been a sixteen year-old boy. That fact hadn't particularly worried

him. It hadn't changed anything. A sixteen year-old with a gun is just as dangerous as any older man.

The boy had been the first – but not the last. In the years that followed, he had been sent to kill on too many times to count. Then had come that business in the underground and more killing. But this was different, not people this time, monsters, things. But it was all the same to the soldier. After that everything had changed. The killing continued, but he found himself attached to a new group with a new C.O. The soldier was in the thick of it. He became an expert killer, relied on to do his superior's dirty work – monsters, creatures, alien threats of all kinds. People too of course, the villains and their henchmen. It was never personal, it was his job to kill them with as little fuss as possible. He had neither enjoyed it nor been worried by it. It was just what he did.

Then one day, one killing had been different. The man had taken him by surprise – a man, not a monster. He had jumped out at him with a knife. The soldier had fought for his life, fought him off and thrown him to the ground. He had managed to fire, and had wounded his opponent without killing him. The man was incapacitated, unable to defend himself. Slowly, enjoying every step, the soldier had walked up to the man and placed his weapon against his head. He paused, looking the man in the eye. He found no trace of fear or pleading, just a resigned acceptance that robbed the soldier of his moment. It was the man

who smiled, as the soldier pulled the trigger and ended his life. He turned and surrendered his breakfast.

He had expected there to be a thrill, a feeling of excitement, elation even; but he had felt nothing, no satisfaction. What was worse was that he knew those feelings had been there waiting for him, just out of his grasp. He knew they were there and he craved them. He would kill again, kill for himself and soon. He would find what had eluded him this time. The opportunity presented itself sooner than he could have hoped.

A chance presented itself and he took it.

Everyone had assumed that Private Carson had died during the battle with the Lizard Men in the caves under Derbyshire. That one was the first to give him real satisfaction. Down there in the caves, no one to see. It had been over in seconds. The soldier had simply come up behind the private, taken hold of his head, one sharp twist and... finished.

This had been different, so different, wonderfully different, thrillingly different. This hadn't been an enemy. He hadn't been killing under orders, for Queen and country, for the Brigadier. This had been for himself and himself alone and it had been an extraordinary feeling.

It had been so easy to hide the body too. Then with the caves destroyed, he

was confident that it would never be found.

In the store cupboard he smiled to himself as he remembered it. In that moment he had felt more alive than at any time before. Every time had been special, but that time had been even more special. He took another look through the door into the laboratory. She would be here any moment. This room would be where her life would end.

Killing Professor Lennox hadn't been difficult, and getting hold of a radioactive isotope to do the job had been embarrassingly easy. It turned out handy too, that for some reason General Carrington had been keen to claim credit for the kill. Of course he hadn't had the satisfaction of being able to watch the ridiculous little scientist die, but there were other compensations. Over the months it continued. Each time he would pick his victim carefully, study them meticulously until he knew their routine, until he could predict their every move. He would choose the place and time of the execution to be certain of success. He wasn't particular how he killed. Sometimes he hit them over the head, a wrench or a hammer from the workshop worked well, it didn't matter. Mostly he used his hands. He loved his hands. Big, strong hands. The hands of a killer.

Sometimes he let them live, because he could. Just because he could. He had that power. Only he could give them that gift. Mostly he killed. That moment when they surrendered their life to those hands. When they stopped breathing, when life passed from their eyes, made him the most powerful man on Earth.

Every time he hid the body, the useless empty remains; careful to choose somewhere where it would never be found. It never occurred to him that he might be caught – and he never was. No-one could stop him – and no-one did. He was the angel of death. Better still, his victims were hardly ever missed.

If only his father had lived to see him now. He would have told him, of course; just to see his face. For once he would have been forced to admit that he had been wrong about him. This would have wiped that sour look of disapproval from his features. He would have had to be proud, despite himself. But no; he would never have admitted to it. He could never have looked at his son with anything other than disappointment and loathing.

Unstoppable! That feeling of certainty had been what had led him to make his first mistake. His first and last. He wouldn't do it again.

He had known for a while that he wanted to take a risk. It was just too compelling a prospect to resist. He had made up his mind that his next victim would be someone close by. One of his colleagues, another of the men. One of his friends. Carson had

been easy, down there in the caves, with no-one to say that it hadn't been the Lizard Men who had killed him. But to kill here at U.N.I.T. H.Q. that would be something.

He has selected his target with his usual care and attention to detail. O'Halloran, Private David, 26 years old, single, parents dead, no family to worry about him. The Project Inferno business had got to him – everyone knew he was on the edge. When he disappeared it would be simple to plant the idea of a breakdown. Like others before him, he would have gone AWOL. Yes they would look for him, but when he wasn't found the file would go onto the back burner. They would be too busy to do anything other than move on. No one would ever wonder what had really happened.

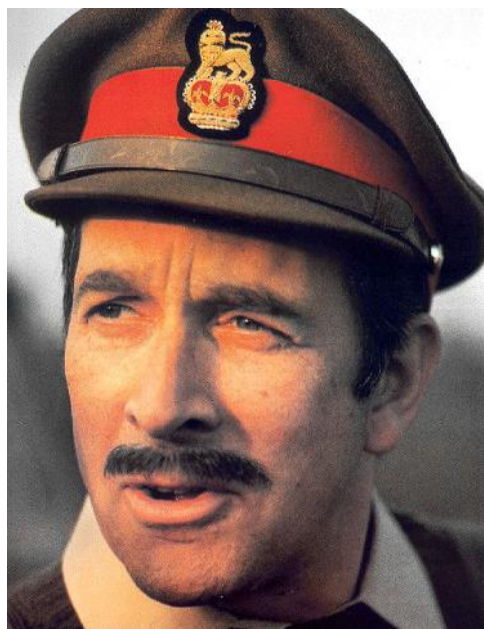
As always the soldier picked his time and place. 02 hundred hours, O'Halloran was coming off duty, walking through the main car park on his way back to the barracks, alone and unobserved. Unobserved other than by the soldier.

He watched O'Halloran approach in the darkness. As he came closer the soldier pulled himself even further back onto the shadows. O'Halloran passed him. Unseen and unheard, the soldier stepped out behind him and made his move. O'Halloran slumped back into the soldier's embrace, his neck broken cleanly.

The sentry on the gate smiled in greeting and checked his pass as he paused at the barrier, then waved the U.N.I.T. Land Rover through. If only he

had known about its grim cargo.

At first it all went as the soldier had expected it to. O'Halloran's absence had been discovered in the morning and after his mates had been questioned, had been quickly put down to desertion. The soldier's nocturnal mission had been discovered and easily explained with reference to a paper that the Brigadier had no memory of signing, but there it was. O'Halloran had no family to worry about him – except there was someone. A step-sister, much older, somehow hadn't been mentioned in the records. The military police found her though, hoping that O'Halloran had taken refuge with her. He hadn't of course, but once alerted to her brother's disappearance, she wouldn't let go. Visits to the Brigadier; letters from her M.P.; threats of questions in the House; reports in the media; the lot. A mess.



Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart had clearly not been convinced that all was as it should be and had asked the Doctor to look into the matter. At this, the Doctor had quite rightly not been impressed, pointing out forcibly that he was supposed to be U.N.I.T.'s scientific advisor and not the Brigadier's private investigator.

For a moment the soldier had been concerned, but the Doctor had not been interested. After the most cursory of investigations, he had been happy to conclude that O'Halloran had in all likelihood absconded. Case closed.

The soldier smiled to himself at the memory. The Doctor certainly had a brilliant mind. If he had done the job properly he might have been a problem, but he could be lazy and arrogant. That was his weakness. Time to select the next victim.

It was a Tuesday in early June when Miss Shaw – Doctor Elizabeth Shaw confided in him that she was soon to leave U.N.I.T. and return to Cambridge. He had always got on well with Dr. Shaw, liked her even. She had always shown him more respect than most of his superiors had done; but then she was a civilian and had a generous and kindly nature. She treated him as an experienced and skilled professional, as a human being rather than as some sort of military drone, a piece of hardware to be deployed. He wasn't sure why he was so certain that he would have to end her life. Perhaps in some way it was a response to her kindness. Certain he was though.

The problem had always been the Brigadier and the Doctor. She was too

close to them. She would be missed. Now this news changed everything. She was leaving. It gave him an opportunity. They would just assume she had left early. And if they never saw her again, so what? That's how it often was. Colleagues – and friends – came and went. Everyone would just move on. The Doctor would get a new assistant, Dr. Shaw would be forgotten.

The storeroom off the Doctor's laboratory was the ideal place. The Doctor himself was away, chasing some story about flying saucers or something. Dr Shaw would be alone. The soldier could do his work unobserved.

He came unseen into the empty laboratory and silently opened the storeroom door. He went in and closed to it behind him, leaving just enough of a gap for him to be able to see the laboratory without giving himself away.

After a moment she followed him into the laboratory. He watched her intently as she began busying herself with her work. Little tasks. These would be her last moments, and she was wasting them, completely unaware of their significance.

He thought about all the days of her life, all the moments; all the thoughts she had had, all the things she had said; all the people she had known and those she had met only in passing; the loves and the hates; the hopes and the fears. He wondered what she had been like as a girl and what she might have been like as an old woman. All the many, many moments that make up even a short life. They had all been leading to this, one final moment, an appointment with him here today. In

some way those moments became his. No, more than that - they became him. As he watched her it occurred to him that this would be his final kill. He had no more to prove, to himself or to his father. He did not know how much longer he would stay with U.N.I.T. His cousin Alan had already promised him a job in his car dealership – a partnership if he proved himself. That might be worth following up. He had to do something. On the other hand he had always fancied running a little country pub. Why not? No rush to decide.

His contemplation was interrupted. The moment had almost arrived. Doctor Shaw had worked her way around the laboratory and was now standing, her back to him, just outside the door. She was almost within reach. Just a little further now. There.

Silent and unseen he stepped out of the storeroom. One more step and the moment would be here. He would take her throat and caress it, squeeze it, end her life. Now!

He made to step forward. As he did so, the door was flung open and the Brigadier bustled in. The soldier stepped back. What had he seen? Had there been anything to make him suspicious? He felt his heart race as the adrenalin pumped through his body. Then relief. He breathed. The officer had been too preoccupied leafing through some papers as he came in to take in the significance of the scene. "Ah, Sergeant, good. Carry on." It was clear that he had just assumed that the soldier had been wasting his time, avoiding being given work to do, talk-



ing to Miss Shaw. For her part the scientist merely gave the soldier a slightly puzzled smile, then focussed on what the Brigadier was saying.

He took his cue to leave. As he did, he caught the beginning of the conversation.

“Miss Shaw, I want your opinion about these personnel profiles.” He handed her the papers. “Possible replacements. For when you leave us. All top scientists, Oxford, Cambridge... We're going for one of the best.”

As he walked down the corridor, he could still taste the adrenalin, feel the visceral excitement. The moment had passed. This was new. He rather liked the sensation. Dr. Shaw had lived to see another day, but she would still give up her life to him. Another moment would come. There would be another opportunity and he would take her. Who would there be to stop him?

REVIEW TORCHWOOD BELIEVE

Review by Rik Moran

Ever wanted a Torchwood movie? Well, here's the nearest thing you're gonna get! And that's not a bad thing. 'Believe' delivers a new, familiar but truly unique Torchwood story wrapped up as a 2.5 hour epic from Big Finish.

Guy Adams talents as a writer shine brightly here. A compelling plot at a good pace, with twists and turns aplenty. A sound understanding of the classic Torchwood team, mixed with interesting new additions are all well directed by Scott Handcock.

The regular cast are pinpoint perfect too, with Barrowman, Myles, Lloyd, Mori and Gorman all acting like they never left, and further helping us to understand how their characters tick. The guest talent of Mac McDonald, Arthur Darvill, Lois Meleri Jones, Mali Harries and others give their all.

There's immaculate sound design by David Nagel (which is way too good in some instances), and brilliant music as always by the astounding Blair Mowat. Believe is a release that is essential to any fan of Torchwood. To ignore it would be sacrilege.

[Click here for the trailer](#)

[Click here to buy from Big Finish](#)

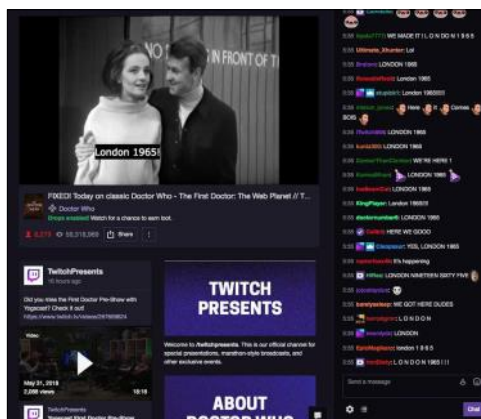
TWITCH PRESENTS THE FIRST DOCTOR

by Rik Moran

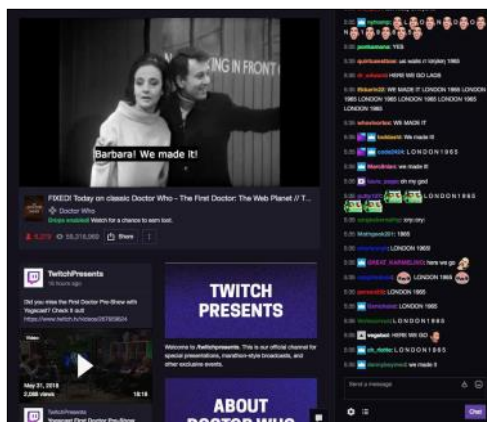
Doctor Who has been around for 55 years, which is an astonishing feat for any television series, and its longevity means that it has literal generations of fans who have grown up with the show. And it's only become more popular in recent years.

When Twitch announced they were going to be doing a marathon of classic Doctor Who I was intrigued. I had no idea what Twitch was and had to go to my 12 year old son to find out. This made me feel very old! Anyway I made myself an account and decided to watch and take part with interest. I soon found out in the chat, that some of the posts I was making contained what could be considered spoilers. It's strange to think of something so old that has been discussed so openly and freely for so long, is being exposed to an audience that the vast majority of have not seen these classic episodes so the concerns about spoilers was duly noted. Last thing I want to do is spoil someone's viewing experience.

So far in the twitch chat, there seems to be two main threads of conversation, both equally valid, the more serious and the more fun, with both sometimes meeting halfway. I've loved to see the positivity that these episodes have been received with and the way the twitch community all seem to get



along really well. The memes have been fantastic, the biggest ones so far being 'London 1965' and 'He Knows'.



The banter when Twitch had a bit of a mere and put on wrong episodes was outstanding. I don't think The Web Planet has ever been in as much demand. And when the last episode of The Chase was finally broadcast the chat room went into meltdown!

Beyond all the jokes and the memes and the banter, isn't it wonderful to see upwards of 10,000 people watching and engaging with a creaky, ancient old Sci-fi show? Classic characters

becoming heroes for a whole new generation. The old magic's still there! By presenting this iconic BBC show in a new interactive format, it is a fun new way to bridge several generations of Doctor Who fans, while building a new generation of them.

If there's one thing we've learned so far from the first three days of Twitch's Doctor Who marathon, it's that there was a lot of both creativity and really strong storytelling from the show's first two seasons. People on the Twitch chat stream seemed to really love "The Romans" more than the Doctor Who fan consensus says people should and that's EXCITING. I hope lots of stories get fresh re-evaluations. "MAD BARB FURY ROAD" as Barbara runs over some Daleks in a truck is my favourite comment so far. There has been some comedy gold in that chat room!

Once the marathon got to season 3 this new crowd discovered their first real issue with missing episodes. Following The Time Meddler, the next story shown was The Ark and plenty of folks were asking "where's Vicki?" There was more confusion at the end of The Ark and beginning of The Gunfighters as to why the Doctor became invisible and why he had tooth ache. Damn those missing episodes!

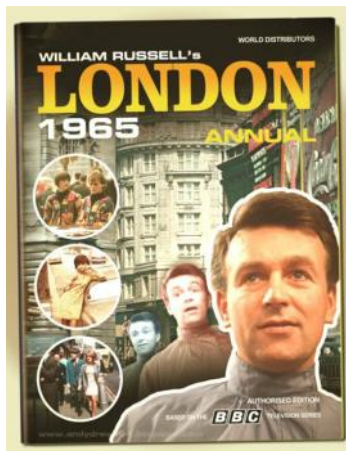
Finally, to conclude The First Doctor episodes, we had The War Machines, I've always loved this story and Ben and Polly in particular, so I was very happy to see them receiving lots of

love from the Twitch crowd and being affectionately called Pollen.

Certainly my favourite part of this marathon has been the people tuning in because they love the show but discovering stories, companions, maybe even a Doctor they never knew existed. Others have expressed it far better than I can (Paul Cornell most notably), but there's something very important coming out of the Twitch Classic Who marathon: reassurance that the fandom is diverse, thriving, curious, and enthusiastically engaged.

I doubt even in his wildest dreams William Hartnell et al would have thought their adventures would be watched in 2018 by a whole new generation on hand held devices.... Now that is science fiction.... Well done twitch!

I don't know, these kids today, with their fidget spinners and black and white Doctor Who... I'm glad The First Doctor has received so much love, I can't wait to see what they make of the next one..



VWORP CONVENTION REPORT

by Sam Haward

I arrived at nine o'clock on a grey Sunday morning at Manchester Printworks, not quite knowing what to expect from my first Doctor Who convention. A profusion of scarves and bowties, and a totally accurate (and quite frankly amazing) Davros recreation, definitely confirmed I was in the right place. Registration was quick and easy, after which I set off to find the Lazy Lizard nightclub, home for the day to the Hartnell stage. Downstairs in the club, lines of wooden benches occupied the dance floor, soon completely filled up with fans. Ideally, three reviews of VWORP are needed as multiple venues ran in parallel. I was forced to forsake the Troughton stage in the Bierkeller, where Bob Baker discussed K9, as well as the Pertwee stage in Tiger Tiger, where Philip Hinchcliffe chose his unsung heroes. However, I chose to stay in the Lazy Lizard for the whole eight hours, as panel after wonderful panel, relayed anecdotes and speculated engagingly on the future of Doctor Who.

The first session was a conversation between Christel Dee and the elegant Sophie Aldred. Projecting her voice beautifully into the depths of the club, Sophie explained how she was in Manchester itself when she first heard she'd got the part of Ace. Appearing in

the chorus of 'Fiddler on the Roof', she received the news mid-performance, even being congratulated by Topol live on stage. She then dropped delicious hints to an excited audience about the thirteenth doctor, since through a forthcoming audiobook, Sophie knew more than she could let on about the new team dynamic. Sophie's sheer joy at performing in the role of Ace, then and now, was evident in spades and all applauded the fact that Big Finish has allowed her adventures to expand in perpetuity.

Next up were Katy Manning, Bob Baker and Stephen Thorne discussing 'the Three Doctors', chaired by the exuberant Annie Wallace from 'Hollyoaks'. This panel had so much to say and were so excitable that often Katy escaped her chair to interact with the audience. We heard a series of wonderful insights: about how Pat and Jon settled into their working camaraderie; about how before Omega, Stephen had not only been Azal, but also an Ogron (which not even Katy knew); and how Unit HQ is now a nursing home (should anyone want to retire there). Bob also told us how the first Doctor was originally intended for a more active role in the adventure, with this first draft sadly now lost. Nevertheless, the panel thought it wonderful that William Hartnell was able to end his career reprising the role he'd so successfully created a decade before. Finally, upon request, Stephen Thorne reprised his booming "I should have been a God" speech, much to the audi-

ence's delight.

Panel three was the entertaining duo of Peter Davison and Graeme Harper discussing the making of both "Caves of Androzani" and "Time-Crash". As Peter pointed out, when he left the show then returned to it all those years later, the director was still the same! The discussion felt fresh and fascinating as Graeme discuss his directorial technique based on his studio-floor presence, highly unusual at the time. Reassured that Peter had found this helpful (if possibly a little mad), it was almost as though the two men were bonding in front of our eyes. Other insights included the potential alternative casting for Sharaz Jek: either Mick Jagger (who wasn't affordable) or David Bowie (who was interested but on tour!). We also learned that Tom Baker uttered vital hints to Peter about becoming the Doctor in the BBC TV Centre bar, which were sadly too noisy for Peter to hear.

Graeme, who proved utterly warm and generous (both on the panel and when I was lucky enough to get his autograph later), then stayed to tell us more about the making of the modern show. Focusing on "Turn Left" through to "Journey's End", he described the differences in filming practice. For the original series, there was plenty of rehearsal time, but evening shoots risked being stopped in their tracks by technicians if they over-ran. Whereas, modern television relies on actors and directors turning up ready for a brief five

-minute huddle before shooting a scene. Graeme also reminisced about the joys of working with Bernard Cribbins and Catherine Tate, and the range and depth of emotion they brought to their roles.

It was then time for another doctor – sixty himself. The wonderfully principled Colin Baker recounted his origins in Manchester, and how he abandoned a career in law for acting. After a brief diversion where he was surprised (and a little shocked) by old TV footage of his cat collection, we learnt about his earlier career. As a proto JR in "The Brothers", he was (impossibly, surely) briefly the most hated man in Britain. He then discussed his Doctor Who costume, which while not exactly loved was a bonus when working on location and latterly helped to make his toy model the most popular of all the doctors! He was joined at the end by the sparkling Nicola Bryant, the chemistry between the two of them still evident.

Nicola was then joined by Sophie, Katy, the Time Ladies and Christel Dee, for a hugely popular panel entitled "the women who lived". In part to promote Christel's new book of stories about female characters from the programme's history, the panel discussed the evolution of female protagonists within the show. All the former companions were thoroughly proud of their characters and contributions. But they also gave interesting insights about how they, within the context of the times they worked in, were able to

pave the way for a natural evolution of female roles within Doctor Who, to the point where Jodie Whittaker feels like “the right person, at the right time” (Katy’s words).

In the seventh panel, Paul McGann revealed the intense secrecy surrounding the making of “The Night of the Doctor” as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. Joined by fellow cast member, Emma Campbell-Jones (in her second convention), we enjoyed their friendship and repartee. We learned much about the joy of actors attending the convention circuit, with them all finding that Doctor Who fans are a strangely friendly and welcoming bunch.

Finally, at five o’clock, with a smaller, but still keen audience, we concluded with one of the most interesting panels of the day. The animators of the DVDs of “Power of the Daleks” and “Shada” described the production process, with Patrick Troughton’s tartan trousers and Tom Baker’s peculiarly expressive mouth being particular challenges. After, as I emerged blinking into the light, I had a last look around the Printworks, popping into the Walkabout bar, where signings and memorabilia purchasing were still in full swing. Sadly, I hadn’t bought a ticket for the after-party, which would have been a whole extra story.

This VWORP celebration was utterly enthralling and a complete success. I understood the event had been an

exciting progression from smaller events in previous years, taking place at a much greater scale, and hence presenting the organisers with all-new logistical challenges. While this meant a few initial technical issues with microphones and running times needed to be resolved, the comperes entertained the audience with great enthusiasm throughout, and the crowd were relaxed in good-natured acceptance. I left the event with two main feelings. First, this had been the most interesting and in-depth of days, where I had come away with so many insights into the making of this fantastic programme. More important was the sense of warmth, camaraderie, and even family, that came not just from the fans, but those starring in and making the programme. I don’t think I ever been to a friendlier event.

Thank you so much to the organisers and roll on next year!



REVIEW

RAVENOUS 2

Review by Rik Moran

Eighth Doctor boxsets continue to prove to be among the highest quality and event-piece releases from Big Finish, and *Ravenous 2* is no exception. The second release in the four-set series, following on from *Ravenous 1*, sees the Doctor, Helen and Liv visit Liv's home planet Kaldor, experience Christmas festivities in Europe and once more encounter the Eleven, this time trapped inside a dying TARDIS.

The TARDIS trio – now long established as a fun and functional team and finally reunited after *Ravenous 1* – take a trip to Liv's home planet. Liv encounters her sister Tula Chenka, but it isn't all smiles and happy memories – instead, Nicola Walker and Claire Rushbrook play the sisterly relationship as one tainted by animosity and regret.

It is a fast-paced story, with short scenes, edited with energy, never dwelling too long in one location before switching to another set of characters. This makes the story feel very modern despite the Classic backdrop – again we have the Eighth Doctor bridging 'Classic' and 'New' Doctor Who in an organic and entirely believable fashion.

One of the most interesting aspects of the story is how it delves into Kaldor class structure. Matt Fitton's criticisms of stratified society with an unfair distribution of wealth and autonomy is unapologetically socialist and political in revealing the struggle of the robot workers and the selfishness of corporate overlords.

Forming the first half of a two-part story,

Better Watch Out is a fantastic opportunity for a deeply-layered tale that fully explores themes and concepts, chief among them being Christmas and the interplay between goodness and evil.

Everything kicks off with Paul McGann narrating a bedtime story (honestly, if the whole story or set was like that, I wouldn't mind at all!). It quickly becomes clear another prominent theme is narration and storytelling; fittingly, the various disparate parts of the story do not yet fit together here and need to be completed in the second half.

Salzburg, Austria, is an evocative setting for a Christmas tale, and it is an inspired idea to draw on the mythology of the tradition itself as the cornerstone of a Doctor Who tale. John Dorney's tale is atmospheric, harrowing and funny, with the looming threat of the Krampus – a creature with the horns and hooves of a goat and a face from every nightmare ever – is built up very well. When the earth beneath Salzburg erupts and a horde of devilish imps emerge to wreak havoc, it all feels organic and well-timed, a clear benefit of the expanded run-time.

The different aspects introduced in *Better Watch Out* finally come together in Fairytale of Salzburg, and the resolution is signposted long beforehand in a rewarding and believable way. Playing heavily into the mythology behind the tradition and the duality of angels and demons, Fairytale of Salzburg has long-reaching consequences and is thoroughly rewarding to listen to.

It all comes full circle, and the ending – a very happy ending – is genuinely touching, heartfelt and puts a smile on your face.



In this fourth episode, we finally meet the Ravenous, the stuff of Time Lord nightmares who feast on the regenerative life energy of Time Lords themselves. They have a horrific sound design full of screams and squeals, and would be enough of a threat themselves if it wasn't for the Eleven being the one to drag the Doctor and friends into the fray when the Eleven asks to be saved.

In many ways, what is most terrifying is when the Doctor is truly terrified, vulnerable and not in control on the situation like he usually is. Add to that the fact that the criminal Eleven, of all people, is even more scared, the threat is heightened even further.

Seizure is not as long as the first three episodes – forming a simpler, more straightforward tale – although this is only boxset number two, and as we are only halfway through the Ravenous arc, forty-five minutes is a good length to whet the appetite for the horrors and mysteries to come.

Once again the team at Big Finish do some great work with their various soundscapes

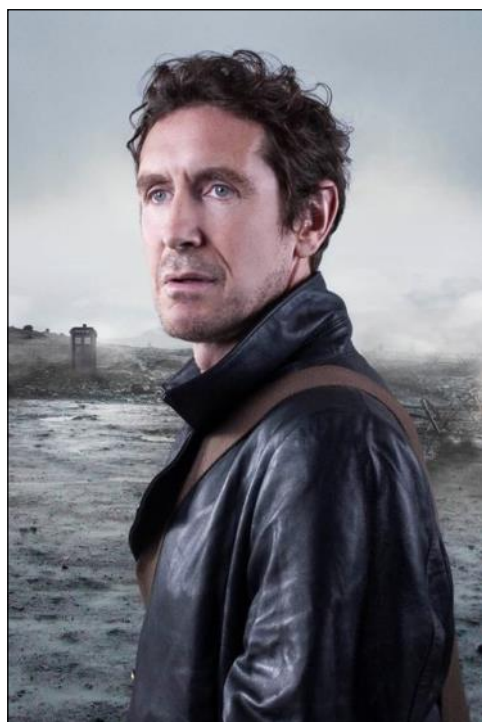
and music. I loved the various pieces of music that were used for 'You Better Watch Out' and 'Fairy-tale Of Salzburg'.

This set provides both a wonderful Halloween and Christmas present for fans of Doctor Who, with a wonderful mix of whimsy and horror.

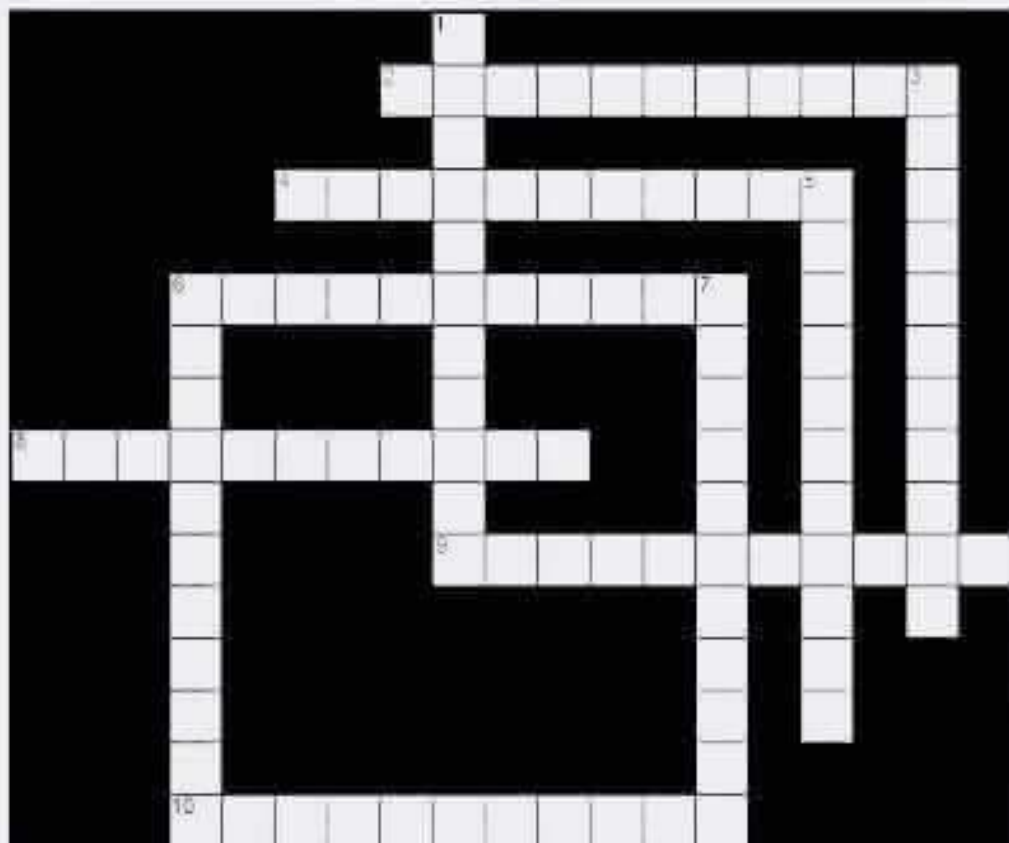
[Click here for the Ravenous 2 trailer](#)

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DALEK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

2. Rehabilitation programme for non-Dalek species (11)
4. Battle cry of fourth Dalek division (11)
6. To kill with the intention of eradicating demographics within a population (11)
8. Dalek Dwayne's catchphrase from popular teen comedy "Skaro High" (11)
9. Davros's famed foreign policy (11)

10 & 6 Down. Popular Dalek saying: "___! ___!" (11,11)

DOWN

1. Suggested course of action upon encountering the Doctor (11)
3. Tactic used at Battle of Arcadia (11)
5. Get rid of by destroying completely (11)
6. See 10 Across (11)
7. Exterminate (11)