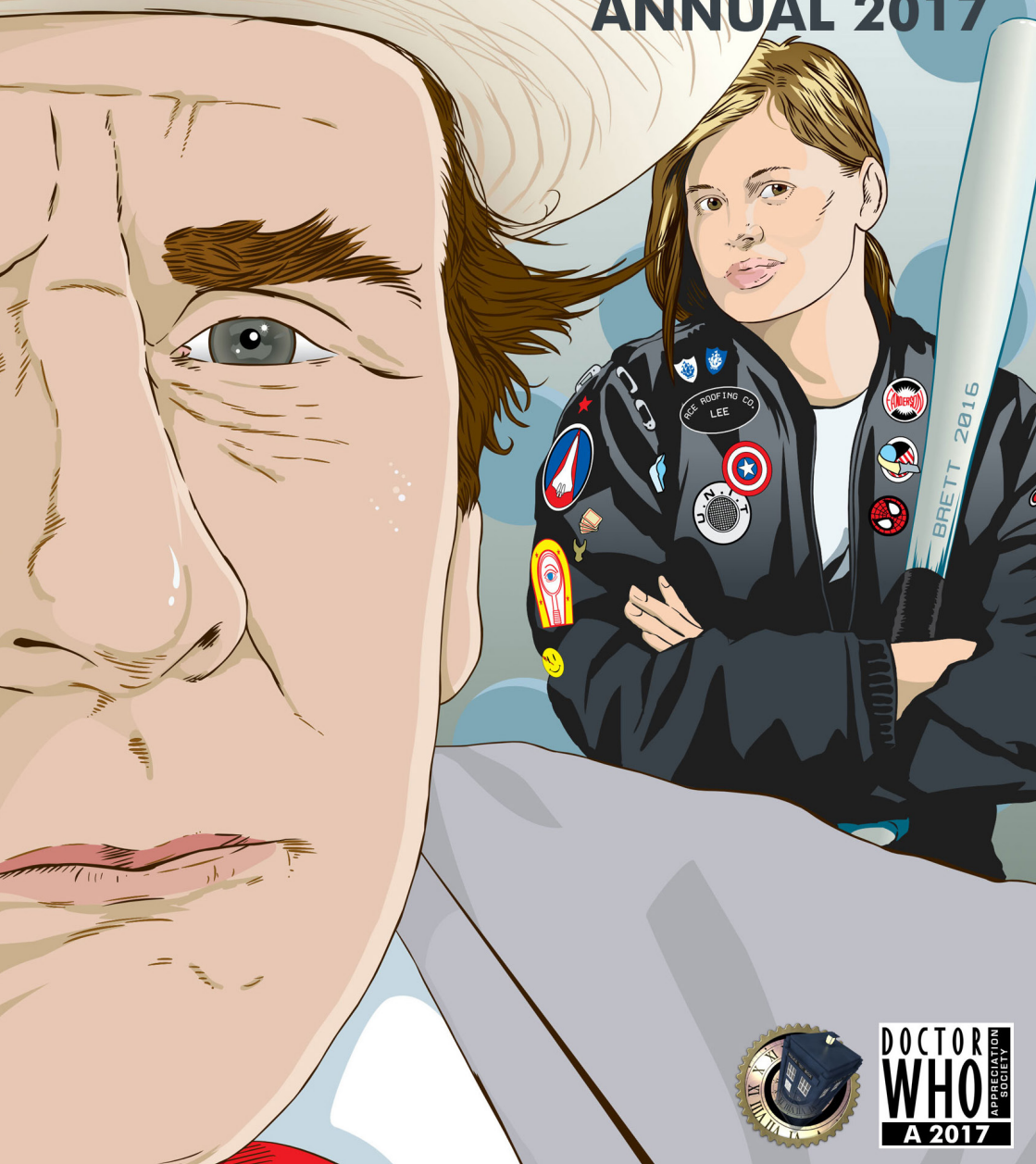


THE CELESTIAL TOYROOM

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DOCTOR
WHO
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MCCOY, ME AND MY MEMORIES

Grant Bull

'My Doctor'... it's a phrase or term of endearment that is mentioned so often when people reminisce about *Doctor Who*. I understand it to mean the Doctor you watched on your introduction to the show. Yet to me there is another layer to it, it's not just the actor or the Doctor – it's the period of time and the way the show reflects or presents it. I'm an 80s child, Sylvester McCoy is my Doctor; I love him and that period of the show and it's not by proxy, it's by fate. For this period of the show either on airing or on revisiting relates to me and my childhood in so many ways. Some subtle, some obvious and some weird...

I guess the first time the show really spoke to me in this manner was *Paradise Towers* and the presence of high-rise tower blocks. The bottom of Sutton High Street where most of our shopping trips took place was and still is home to an estate whose flats grow into the sky. A grey slab with windows that seemingly could touch the clouds. As a kid I would crane my neck back to see the top. All those people, those families living on top of each other, side by side. An impossible amount of individuals who will never have enough time to meet or know one and other. Then all of a sudden the Doctor was in one and all hell was breaking lose. Gangs, graffiti, dirt and broken lifts. It reflected all I had been told. I never did find out if the ones I knew were home to cannibal OAPs but I'm positive there was no swimming pool at the top.

Holiday camps, a British tourism haven. I don't recall the location but I recall the holidays, my Mum, Dad and I and my Grandparents. Chalets with pathways to the door surrounded by strips of grass. Organised games and activities and my Granddad introducing me to random kids to make friends with. Rounds of crazy golf, pausing to have photos taken with non-digital cameras. Wonderful, simplistic times and memories. Even with the Doctor and Mel fighting a galactic battle across these surroundings

Delta and the Bannermen means so much to me. It stirs these memories and brings me close to warm tears and then brings a chuckle as I recall my Dad's disdain of Ken Dodd as he hammed up his Tollmaster role.

As the catering manager of a school, my Dad worked some summer holiday whilst clubs were run. Basically sports and activity lead events for kids whose parents couldn't get the time off in the school holidays. I tagged along one time hiding out in the kitchen office reading my *Shoot* and *Match* annuals until I was sent to join in the fun. The school it was being held in had a massive playground, games painted onto the floor and a wall around the outside high enough to keep kids and lost balls in. In *Remembrance of the Daleks* I saw this concrete play zone again, to me it was Coal High School and the Daleks could have invaded that summer. My Dad is a dab hand at rice pudding too, unlimited or otherwise.

Silver Nemesis brought more holiday nostalgia as Arundel Castle doubled for Windsor Castle. Our touring caravan was towed down to The White Rose Caravan Park for many a weekend or sometimes longer with Arundel just a stone's throw away. Trips to the beautiful town with its Castle, Cathedral, Trout Farm and Lido were endless. In fact this serial reflected the contrasts of our town and country life from weekday to weekend. Like *Doctor Who* itself, our caravan was an escapism, the smoke of South London giving way to the colour green and the smell of pig farms.

The list goes on; I think of the Kandyman in *The Happiness Patrol* and my Granddad's stocked box of liquorice springs to mind. *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* and our family trip to the circus with runaway gorilla. Even to this day new additions are still appearing as old memories are awakened from their slumber by The Doctor, Mel and Ace's adventures.

The Seventh Doctor isn't just my Doctor, it's my era, it's my childhood, my memories and fears all played out in front of my eyes on the telly by my hero. It's me, it's mine. And I wouldn't have it any other way. ▲



THE DOCTOR'S STRANGE CHANGE (or, How I Never Learned to Worry by Loving a Bomb) by Brendan Jones

"If it was truncated into three episodes, and came with a self-lobotomising kit, this might have been a passable adventure romp. But it isn't."

Doctor Who: The Discontinuity Guide, Paul Cornell, Martyn Day and Keith Topping.

Cast your minds back to the 31st of October, 1988. The date lands squarely between the premieres of *Remembrance of the Daleks* Part Four and Part One of *The Happiness Patrol*, for UK viewers at least. Meanwhile, in Australia, the date marked the debut of Sylvester McCoy's Doctor. *Time and the Rani* was stripped across four nights – and it was the first Doctor Who story I ever recorded on glorious VHS tape.

I had seen plenty of Doctor Who by this time, thanks to my father's obsession with recording it (and neatly labelling the tapes with episode titles, production codes, and Doctor-actor), but this was the first time I was pressing the buttons.

Awaiting the premiere of this new series is one of my earliest childhood memories. Standing under a jacaranda tree in the school playground on the cusp of spring and

summer (it must have been an unseasonably cold day as I was wearing mittens), and trying to enthuse my friend Andrew for the upcoming episode.

Strange that then, unlike now, I would have known nothing about it. However, the thrill came from just knowing that new Doctor Who was coming – something I could never have seen before, and which didn't have an entry in The Doctor Who Programme Guide or Doctor Who: A Celebration.

It was the first, and to date only, time I was surprised by a regeneration. Forget for a moment that we all know it's just Sylv wearing a wig. I didn't know then. In fact, I didn't know for about seven years. As an adult, I look at that scene and recognise what a significant cock-up it represents. As a child, I look at it and see my favourite Doctor coming into being (Sylvester was my favourite Doctor then. Now it's Patrick. I also don't enjoy eating chicken and vegemite sandwiches any more. Tastes change).

Those four nights were packed with action, adventure, mayhem, and intrigue. I was most drawn to the mistaken identity element of the plot, with the Doctor thinking Mel was the Rani and vice versa; Ikona believing that Mel and the Doctor were villains; and Mel thinking that the Doctor was not the Doctor. The regeneration stories were among my favourites as a child, with *Spearhead*, *Spiders*, *Robot*, *Logopolis* and *Castrovalva* regularly featuring in the rotation. This one was different, however. First of all, I had no idea what was going to happen next. Secondly, I felt a real tension with the Doctor and Mel being separated and unaware of

what had happened to the other. Of course, separation is part of the DNA of Doctor Who, but the difference here is that the Doctor doesn't even realise he's been separated from Mel.

But surely, really, childhood fondness aside – this story is rubbish, isn't it? Bona fide, third-worst-story-in-both-the-Mighty-200-and-First 50-Years-Doctor-Who-Magazine-Polls rubbish, right?

Well, of course it is. The direction is all over the place, Sylvester McCoy seems to be doing some feeble impersonation of Buster Keaton, Kate O'Mara somehow managed to be intimidated by Bonnie Langford, and Wanda Ventham and Donald Pickering display two emotional states: hope (that the cheque will come through) and concern (that the make-up won't wash off).

These things are easy to recognise as adults watching the programme, but as a child all I could do was enjoy the story and get swept up in the plot. It wasn't until about 1995 that I discovered that people didn't like this story, this season, and (gasp!) Sylvester McCoy and Bonnie Langford in their roles. You see, that was the year I discovered Doctor Who fandom and with it, Received Fan Wisdom (RFW).

For those of you who have come to love Doctor Who since 2005, the years between 1990 and the revival were fuelled by the creativity of fans. Four lines of novels, spawned entirely from the fans' love of the series, and bitingly witty reference books abounded. With no Doctor Who to watch on the TV, we quite literally made our own; we created new stories, and reappraised old ones thanks to the booming rise of the home video era. With this increased level of scrutiny and analysis came RFW – a gestalt view of the show which told you what was good and bad without you actually having to watch it. This was good, because it told you that *The Web Planet*, for instance, was absolutely terrible, so you didn't have to (a) seek out a near-unwatchable bootlegged copy of it from some bloke with two

precariously networked VHS machines or (b) pay £39.98 for the official near-unwatchable two video cassette release from BBC Video. RFW told you that both of these actions were pointless, and just to accept the judgement of those who knew.

I still remember the day I was told that *Time and the Rani* was terrible. It was at a meeting of the SDWSFFC (Sydney Doctor Who Science Fiction Fan Club, because don't we all love a good unpronounceable acronym?), and I had used some of my pocket money to buy a copy of the newly released *Doctor Who: The Discontinuity Guide*. I was confused to read the appraisal of *Time and the Rani*, and a quick word with my friends around me confirmed not only that it was terrible, but also the awful truth that Colin Baker was not in that first scene.

My twelve-year-old self was appalled.

I was appalled by their terrible taste. How could they hate *Time and the Rani*? How could they simply not adore Mel? Why had I never realised that 'loyhargil' was an anagram of 'holy grail'?

I watched it again and again, but I could never hate it. I enjoyed it all immensely, from "Leave the girl" right up to "I'll grow on you." Did this mean I was a bad fan, to be so at odds with RFW? That couldn't be right. I also loved *City of Death* and *Spearhead from Space*. The paradox didn't keep me up at night, but did rather confuse me at times.

I got my answer around the time I bought *The Caves of Androzani* on DVD in 2001. I had never seen it, but it had a legendary status in fan circles. Prepare yourselves for a shock – I find it to be brilliant television drama.

However, *The Caves of Androzani* is terrible Doctor Who.

There, I said it. Actually, it's not much of a secret. I say it on my podcast all the time, which is a bit awkward really as we've only just started covering Davison, and I'm already burying his burial. There is a point to this

though – a point to my love of *Time and the Rani*, versus my, to be kind, indifference to *The Caves of Androzani*. Pretty much, *Caves* is dark, bleak and exceptionally well written – but *Time and the Rani* is fun, and thrilling, and scary.

I invite you back to 1988 again. I was five years old; new Doctor Who was coming onto the telly; the chill of the spring was winding down; I had no idea what would happen to Mel spinning down the hill in that bubble. I laughed when Urak fawned over the Rani, I clutched a cushion when the Tetraps captured Mel, and I pitied the loss of Sarn.

I invite you back to the Doctor Who stories you watched when you were five. Maybe you remember Daleks in the Thames, or Cybermen in the sewers; Maggots or Mummies or Myrka or Morlox or the Master in San Francisco. Or, for you younglings, perhaps it was Gelth, Angels, Silence or (though I doubt you'll be reading CT yet if this is the case!) the Boneless. I'm confident when I say that whatever Doctor Who you were watching at five years old – you still love it. You're not blind to its faults (if any), but even if Received Fan Wisdom is against, I'm sure you aren't.

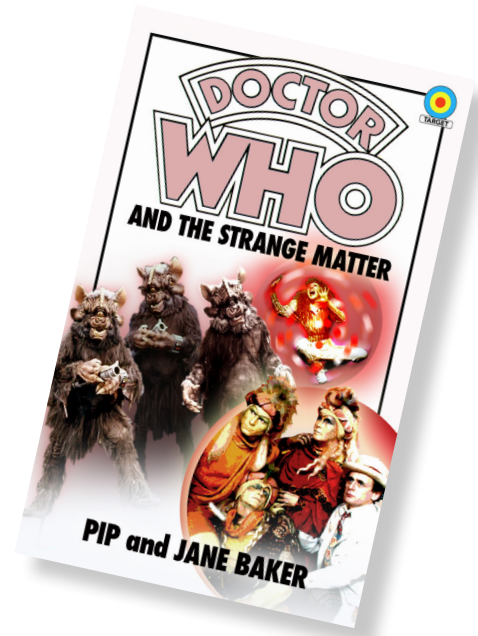
Every story really is someone's favourite. My favourite, as you may have guessed, is *The Androids of Tara* (and if you did guess, well done, seriously) - but *Time and the Rani* will always hold an extra special place in my heart, and joyous one at that. Just so you know that it's not all puppy love, however, I'll leave you with a more adult view of why *Time and the Rani* is worthy of praise.

Doctor Who had just come out of a period of stories criticised for their violence and dark themes. The series' long-running script editor was jaded and disillusioned; its longer-running producer was tired and didn't want to return. The previous four seasons had leaned increasingly heavily on the series' mythology, to the point of becoming incomprehensibly mired within it.

Time and the Rani contains, aside from the Doctor, Mel, the TARDIS and regeneration, precisely one past element from the series in the shape of the Rani. She is a recently created returning character and, importantly, one who is re-established well enough in this that it doesn't matter if you've not seen her before. Outside of that, we have two completely new alien races, and a completely recognisable (if clichéd) plot of good versus evil. It's not a complex story, but it is one which is easy to watch and understand – a palate cleanser after the continuity dump of the last few years.

I'm not bashing JNT and Saward. I love *Warriors of the Deep*, *The Visitation*, *Mawdryn Undead* and many others. However, *Time and the Rani* wasn't just a new beginning for me – it was a new beginning for Doctor Who. It may well be objectively terrible, but it's still subjectively wonderful. In the final analysis, Received Fan Wisdom is more guidelines than strict rules – and you can save yourself a lot of worry by just enjoying whatever story you enjoy.

The Twin Dilemma, though- yeesh. Sorry Colin. ▲



PARADISE TOWERS- REVENGE OF THE ARCHITECT

by Jenny Shirt

Paradise Towers isn't a popular choice in the world of Doctor Who adventures, but I found it a fun story that doesn't take itself overly seriously. The Doctor, in his Seventh incarnation, is beginning to discover his new character, which at times becomes a little dangerous and he seems to relish this. He revels in trying to break the regulations set by the Caretakers, who control the building, whilst trying to find the source of evil that is causing the murders to happen in the apartment block. Mel's ear-piercing screams were also something quite spectacular in this story and, to this day, I am still discovering ways of getting my hearing back. Richard Briars played the Chief Caretaker in a very pantomime-like way, but everything about Paradise Towers was a little over the top and not your classic Doctor Who-style story. I look back on it with fondness as I loved the whole concept of the Doctor and Mel watching a wonderful promotional video on the TARDIS viewing screen showing the luxurious Paradise Towers, leading them into the adventure. The dream swimming pool Mel hopes to find there, however, has secrets and, in reality, Paradise Towers is a high rise apartment block in a state of ruin. The advertising brochure was a little out of date. The brilliant architect in the basement has lost control and descended into madness and murderous ways after his beautiful creation is completely ruined by its residents, who are now setting on each other. This was the perfect situation for the Doctor to walk into and sort out. Let's face it, if he couldn't save everyone from a flesh-gathering evil architect, nobody could. While it might not be classic Doctor Who, it is great fun and, even under the arch way it was presented, the themes were, I felt, in line with the times and in a way a lesson in what could happen if we left everyone to survive in a universe that was crumbling around them.

The characterisations are great fun and rather over the top, but deceptively so. The two older ladies, for example, Rezzies Tilda and Tabby, are far from what they initially seem. On the surface they are scatty and seemingly lifted from a cosy situation comedy. However, they were genuinely scary when you finally realised they were actually eating people to exist. This made me feel quite repulsed and it set a much darker tone and the story became a little more political in its themes (politics were there from the beginning, though, and very visually, too, in the way the Kangs' gangs were group-dressed in the colours of the main three political parties at the time: red, blue and, for a short time, yellow). I felt that it became a bit of a black comedy and I recall being quite disturbed by these two Rezzies, who, after being all sweetness and light with her, captured Mel with a shawl made of their own crochet work. All the time they had been planning to put her on their dinner menu, fattening her up so that they could survive. But even then, I remember how the story became rather cartoon-like again in tone, especially in these scenes when Pex makes a bumbled attempt to rescue Mel and the two cannibalistic Rezzies meet their gruesome end by being claw-dragged down their waste disposal chute.

Thinking about it, Paradise Towers was more of a fantasy tale, one where, to enjoy it, you needed to let your imagination accept this and run with it. Pex, your ultimate wannabe Superhero trying to protect Mel, is, in reality, the total opposite and a complete, 'cowardly cutlet'. The Kangs are gangs of wonderfully colourful characters who resemble something from an Adam Ant music video with their style of clothing and make-up. The only slightly disappointing thing I feel (as you expect something truly terrifying) were the white cleaner robots, as, rather than being frightening, they were more like murderous mobile hoovers. Also, as for what Mel ultimately finds waiting for her in the 'great pool in the sky' when she gets there, the day-glow yellow robotic crab, well, at least the cleaners could actually move. It did, however, give Pex his chance to become

the hero he wanted to be. It's just a shame he didn't manage to fulfil his dream.

The whole concept of these different factions warring against each other, yet being brought together by the Doctor to fight the evil architect, makes a fun tale of good versus evil. The definite highlight for me though is Richard Briars wonderful 'out there' performance as the Chief Caretaker. His turn becomes more and more extreme as the story progresses, culminating in the moment when he is zombified. This still makes me think of his roles in sitcoms. I wasn't able to take him too seriously as he became a little like Adolf Hitler, as he'd been so un-subtly dressed up, mixed with Martin from Ever Decreasing Circles.

I loved the light feel and how that was applied to the whole idea of the story, and really appreciate how experimental it was and how different from previous stories. It may not have worked for a lot of people but, looking back, it tried hard to be different and it's remembered for that. It worked for me, though, and watching it again so many years later I think I enjoyed it even more than I remembered. ▲



NOSTALGIA FOR NEVER WAS

by Jon Arnold

1987 was the year nostalgia got big in Britain. It was the twentieth anniversary of Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band; the year the Beatles were canonised again and ascended to the status of cultural monuments. Five years later it would lead to Britpop, Britain's 1960s replayed as comedy by the children of the baby boomers. But it was specifically nostalgia for the decade where British music conquered America, where we found that cultural imperialism and soft power could replace our dying Empire. We drew a clean line at the end of 1962; the release of Love Me Do. We could celebrate the 60s of the Beatles, Doctor Who and England's World Cup winners but anything before the Beatles released their first single? Dullsville, baby.

50s nostalgia had been an American thing in the 1970s; the baby boom generation reducing their youth to icons: Elvis, Coca Cola, Ford Thunderbirds and Marilyn Monroe. America was the dominant power in the world and the post-war generation were enjoying the fruits of its affluence. It was fetishised by Happy Days and Grease and subverted by American Graffiti and Bruce Springsteen. In the UK it was seen as a faintly tragic time to be obsessed with; the province of the middle-aged guy who'd never got over the coming of the Beatles and whose quiff was tragically dyed, a doomed attempt to keep the hand of the clock from ticking over to the 1960s. It even looked terribly tedious on the BBC's prime time nostalgia show The Rock 'n' Roll Years (which showed news from those years soundtracked by music from the time).

America's 1950s were the technicolour of the movies; Britain's 1950s were the monochrome grey of newsreels and grainy, flickering TV. No-one wanted to remember the UK of the late 1950s. The Suez Crisis had underlined the country's decline as a world

power, the starburst of rock 'n' roll had been emasculated by Elvis Presley's conscription and Buddy Holly's death, and all that was left was the tame version peddled by the likes of Cliff Richard and Adam Faith. It was such a dull, stodgy period it led to satire as we understand it now being invented with *Beyond the Fringe*; we had to mock the dull conformity of it all to remain sane. The musical language of rebellion, neutered and castrated for the mass market, a four year interregnum ended when the blast of John Lennon's harmonica on *Love Me Do* signalled the arrival of the more energetic, radical 60s. Rock 'n' roll had become the sort of music you could build nice safe package holidays at Butlin's camps around. Who wanted to revisit that when the glamour of Swinging London was so much more memorable? Even worse, who'd want to visit the grey backwaters of the UK of that era?

Perversity being one of Doctor Who's best attributes, it made the undesirability of the destination part of the point when it turned itself into *The Rock 'n' Roll Years* crossed with *Hi de Hi!* for three weeks. Who'd end up in Wales at the arse end of the 1950s except by accident? The Doctor, Mel and a bunch of alien tourists who got lost on the way to Disneyland as it turns out. Right from the start it's clear we're headed for somewhere second rate; the precise opposite of the 'interesting times' of the supposed old Chinese curse. The Navarino technology is clearly cheap and unreliable and the Navarinos themselves amiable enough to settle for second rate in search of a holiday. Holiday camps were becoming unfashionable in the 1980s, with *Hi de Hi!* relentlessly mocking it as less than glamorous and with foreign travel becoming cheaper; in that sense *Delta* and *the Bannermen* is perfectly of its time. The difference is that *Delta* refuses to mock its locale; and that's why *Delta* remains an underrated serial. In the wake of five years of Eric Saward's gloomy, cynical outlook, this is where the series regains the compassion that was slowly eroded, particularly as Saward looked to Robert Holmes's darker instincts for inspiration. It's where the series finally throws off the shadow cast by *The*

Caves of Androzani; where it stops trying to straitjacket itself by trying to be grown up in a very teenage way. Shangri-La is typically British; barely third-rate, zero budget and held together with blu-tac and sticky tape; but ingenuity and lashings of hard graft going into making sure everyone has a good time (much like the series itself at this point). And *Delta* finds much to admire in that; particularly in the courage of Burton and how he essentially takes aliens in his stride. Compassion is one of the key attributes of Cartmel's era, from Pex's redemption through the decision not to kill the Brigadier off and explicit in *Survival*'s mantra 'if we fight like animals, we'll die like animals.' *Delta* is where that comes to the fore.

The commitment to the 1950s setting and rock 'n' roll extends to the story itself. At the heart of it is a love triangle; boy tempted away from a local sweetheart by an exotic stranger. It's ripped straight from the jukebox; a heartbroken Ray watching her sweetheart stolen. Killjoy fans have often criticised the unlikely Chimeron biology of the story but as Who's brand of science-fiction is a relabelled British strain of fantasy they're missing the point; this is ultimately a story about the magic of love, and in pop music love almost always has the magical power to overcome any obstacle. The casting is on point for theme and setting too – both Ken Dodd and Brian Hibbard made it to the top of the British charts and Dodd, Hugh Lloyd and Stubby Kaye first became popular in the 50s. The only ways *Delta* really falters are in the soundtrack and title; it maintains the synths which dominated the show under JNT when a retro-flavoured soundtrack could only have enhanced the period setting, and *Flight of the Chimeron* has a romantic quality missing from the final title.

Delta and *the Bannermen* is ultimately a beautiful dead end; both a pointer to the future and a one-off. After his firefighting on *Time and the Rani* and the flawed but fascinating *Paradise Towers* it's the first proof that Andrew Cartmel's vision for the show can work. It's filled with beautiful little moments (the Doctor dancing with Ray, Don

Henderson's scurvy Gavrok, Bonnie Langford finally getting material that suits her, just about any scene with Goronwy); small but beautiful pauses which serve to ground the ambition of the stories and which trademark the Seventh Doctor's era. But it's also a joyful one-off. This Doctor would never get an adventure this lightly joyous again; the darker Doctor of *Remembrance of the Daleks*, always plotting and scheming away, would dominate his last two seasons. Whilst that gives us some of the best Doctor Who of all it's a shame they couldn't have found room to give the slightly goofy improviser seen here another airing. *Delta* is a vision of a different, lighter road the series might have travelled; a joyful dance through the highways and backwaters of space and time. Our collective fan nostalgia tends to exclude Doctor Who's twenty-fourth season, a time when the show was curling itself into the new and different shape of its final seasons. Nostalgia tends to skate over details for the bigger, collective joys and neglect the smaller ones. *Delta* is one of the forgotten treasures painted over by our folk memory of Time's Champion. Sometimes those grey forgotten corners of the past aren't as bleak as our imperfect memories imply; *Delta* reminds us is that if you look hard enough you can always find joy. ▲



BAPTISM OF DRAGONFIRE by Sophie Aldred

Little did I think as I found my way to the North Acton rehearsal studios and rather nervously took my seat in Room 202 for the readthrough of *Dragonfire* that I would be writing about it nearly thirty years later. I remember it as though it were yesterday.

First the heavy package of script in a manila envelope which had dropped with a satisfying "thunk" onto my doormat several weeks beforehand. It contained a letter from the director's PA, Rosemary, on BBC headed notepaper informing me of the start of rehearsals on July 16th 1987. Then ripping open the package, and as I read, becoming more and more excited as I realised that Ace's part was not only central to the storyline, but well written, fun and very realistic. Now, weeks later, pushing open the big double doors to Room 202 and seeing the large table at the end of the huge room and the expanse of floor I had to cross, legs a little shaky, in order to get to it. Sitting myself down a little shyly behind Pat Quinn, Chris Clough the director asks us all to introduce ourselves in turn: "Hi, I'm Bonnie Langford!", "Hello, Sylvester McCoy", "Tony Osoba", "Eddie Peel", "Sophie Aldred" (who?) and as the read through ends, Pat Quinn turns to me smiling, eyebrows raised; "Darling! You've got rather a large part!"

Funnily enough I can't remember the precise moment I met Sylvester, however we quickly discovered we share a birthday (August 20th - Sylv says we are twins, he's just aged worse than me) and a sense of humour; in fact Sylv says the reason why we get on so well is that I'm the only person who laughs at his jokes. Together we would invent business and embellishments, sometimes at the very last minute on the studio floor which must have been a director's nightmare! We worked as a team; Sylv suggested that because of our surroundings we would find it difficult to

walk in the passages of Iceworld - if you look carefully, we are the only two actors who are slipping about on the polystyrene and plastic ice as we go through the corridors. It looks like we have a shoe problem!

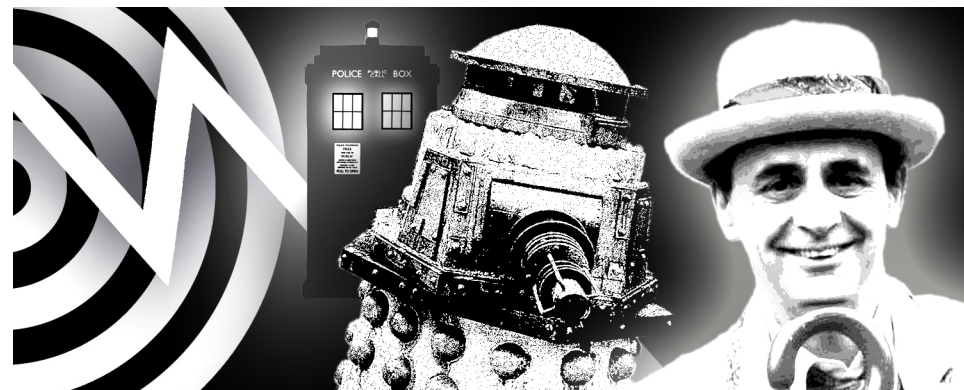
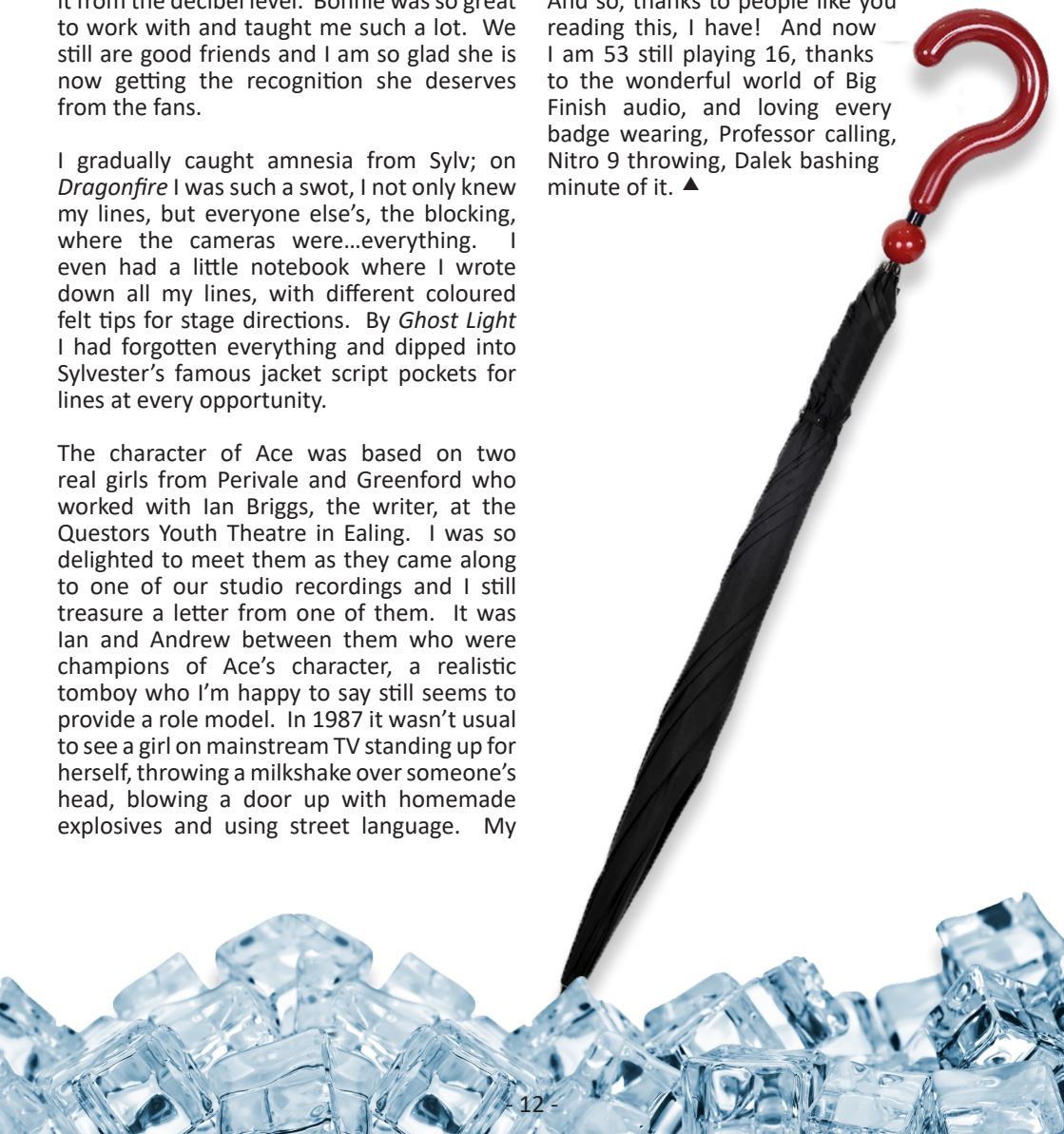
Early on I decided along with Andrew Cartmel that Ace would never scream. Bonnie, however was brilliant at it and if you look at my face when Mel sees the dragon for the first time, you can see the pain etched across it from the decibel level. Bonnie was so great to work with and taught me such a lot. We still are good friends and I am so glad she is now getting the recognition she deserves from the fans.

I gradually caught amnesia from Sylv; on *Dragonfire* I was such a swot, I not only knew my lines, but everyone else's, the blocking, where the cameras were...everything. I even had a little notebook where I wrote down all my lines, with different coloured felt tips for stage directions. By *Ghost Light* I had forgotten everything and dipped into Sylvester's famous jacket script pockets for lines at every opportunity.

The character of Ace was based on two real girls from Perivale and Greenford who worked with Ian Briggs, the writer, at the Questors Youth Theatre in Ealing. I was so delighted to meet them as they came along to one of our studio recordings and I still treasure a letter from one of them. It was Ian and Andrew between them who were champions of Ace's character, a realistic tomboy who I'm happy to say still seems to provide a role model. In 1987 it wasn't usual to see a girl on mainstream TV standing up for herself, throwing a milkshake over someone's head, blowing a door up with homemade explosives and using street language. My

only regret is that her accent is too much mine, too middle class. I remember going to Chris Clough after the first week of rehearsals and asking him three questions; am I playing her young enough, (I was actually 24 playing 16) should I do more of a Cockney accent and was my acting style OK for TV as I had never been in front of a camera before, not even for a screen test. Chris said "What you're doing is just perfect. Carry on."

And so, thanks to people like you reading this, I have! And now I am 53 still playing 16, thanks to the wonderful world of Big Finish audio, and loving every badge wearing, Professor calling, Nitro 9 throwing, Dalek bashing minute of it. ▲



REMEMBRANCE (OF THE REMEMBRANCE) OF THE DALEKS by Cliff Chapman

Older Doctor Who fans will generally assume that by 1988, kids weren't pretending to be cornered by Daleks, or being the Kandyman, improvising non-canonical *DOOSH! DOOSH!" Foley work with their mouths to dramatically convey his marshmallow feet stomping through pipes. They're wrong. I was, and with friends too. I'm a McCoy fan. I'd just turned seven when *Remembrance of the Daleks* aired and an anxious nearly-eight year old when the video repair man dropped off our VHS deck just in time for me to safely record *Battlefield*. He was all, "I remember the Dalek coming out of the river!", "I remember the Sea Devils coming out of the sea!", "I remember when he fell off the telescope!" Yeah, well, I remember when the Dalek went up the stairs the first time (on screen). It had a huge impact on me. And, speak of the Devils...

I got to work with Terry Molloy the other day. We were both recording various parts for the new *Robin of Sherwood: Knights of the Apocalypse* audio from Spiteful Puppet. With Lisa Bowerman there as well, it was something of childhood dream not only being in something iconic and wonderful, but with two significant actors from Doctor Who right back at the beginning (for me). I introduced

myself as we sat along seats in the corridor outside the studio, third time lucky after sort of hovering nearby a couple of times.

Terry told me, having read the audiobook of *Remembrance* recently, how mature he found the novelisations of the time, with a depth he wouldn't have necessarily expected. He also said that he found Sylvester and others fairly straightforward to capture, but he'd had to think to get Davros back.

I sat there, thinking...I could remind him! I know how to do it! I can do my Davros impression for him, right now, and it definitely won't be anything like Dougal going up to Richard Wilson and saying "I don't believe it!" In my mind, I was already perfectly mimicking the famous, "In the end, you are merely just another Time Lord!" line in his (well, Davros's) voice. I say 'famous' but was in fact a line that was cut from broadcast and only people who watch Doctor Who documentaries have ever seen it. I also considered beating myself in the stomach with something heavy in order to render me speechless and then knocking my own head forcefully into a wall six times to stop myself from screaming, "We will sweep away Gallifrey and its impotent quorum of Time Lords!" I've been doing little impressions of Davros for years, usually once people who are wrong and unpleasant are out of earshot. I knew I could do it. Everyone else was doing their thing. Freddie Fox was on his phone in the other bit of the lounge. Nikolas Grace and others were in the studio.

However, I didn't do it, because it would have been silly. I did not do my Davros impression for Terry Molloy. I did not rant, I did not scream, yell, bellow, articulate, nor ejaculate, which of course is a word that means "to expel words".

But I was excited.

My copy of *Remembrance*, the original taped-off-the-telly version from 1988, still survives at my mother's. It has a few spots of white mould on it, so will never play again, and it's spread across two tapes because I liked recording lots of things back then. It's mixed in with episodes of Droids and Ewoks cartoons, and the Sooty Show in the Matthew Corbett era – all other programmes you imagine you'd probably still enjoy as an adult, but crushingly disappoint when you review them (apart from Sooty, which is still a finer sitcom than many of the last twenty five years). The novelisation of *Remembrance*, full of bits too broad and too deep for the small screen, had at least three reads, maybe more. I think I own two copies, because one got thoroughly knackered through living in a school bag for about six months.

All this said, *Remembrance* has had a huge effect on me, and I saw it at just the right age to forever love it – but is it actually any good?

Well, of course it is. Let's wipe all attachment and emotion and chemical memories and look at it properly. It's still brilliant.

It's hard to think now, with ten years of success behind the new series of Doctor Who, how vulnerable and unloved the series was in the late Eighties. Nathan Turner and Saward's rucks, Eric's lack of ideas, the influence of Ian Levine, stories like *Attack of the Cybermen* and eventually *The Trial of a Time Lord*, enjoyable enough for a fan but not really connecting with an audience any more.

Watching *Remembrance*, it's fascinating to see how much continuity is in there, but the story is interesting enough, and the dialogue clear and sparky enough, to

carry off exposition in a way that engages the viewer – especially when compared to *Attack of the Cybermen*, which is a checklist of references to twenty years of Cybermen stories, throwing around references to the death of Mondas, Tombs, earth Invasions and the like, and introducing the Cryons in a way that makes the casual viewer feel like they're being shown just one more thing they're supposed to have already experienced and remembered. Totter's Yard in *Attack of the Cybermen* is treated as a sort of throwaway reference that doesn't really matter; in *Remembrance*, it's the scene of a major opening episode set-piece. There's no real reason why the TARDIS should materialise in the junk yard in *Attack*. In *Remembrance*, the lone Dalek has detected the presence of the Doctor and it makes a lot of sense. It's the perfect Twenty-Fifth Anniversary story – far more than the way *Silver Nemesis* re-treads many of the same beats to lesser effect weeks later.

Some people have a problem with the Doctor blowing up Skaro, citing it as a terrible foreshadowing of neoliberal Blair/Bush posturing and unprovoked offence. The point is, well, come on, they're Daleks! I mean...but...they're Daleks for crying out loud! Actually, it's not quite that because actually he doesn't blow up Skaro – that aspect of the denouement is as much out of the Doctor's hands as *The Seeds of Doom* or any number of other stories, yet he's been at the centre of the action, kept a reasonable number of the good guys alive and faced off both Davros and the Black Dalek. Over a bit of ineffective gun-waving in Davros's face in *Resurrection*, or complete bystander status in *Revelation*, it's good enough for me.

It's arguable we could all have a problem with the implication that the reason the First Doctor settled on Earth and sent his granddaughter to Coal Hill School was because he was hiding a weapon and setting a trap for villains he hasn't even met yet. But look at the evidence: the casket was left by "an old geezer with white hair." Could be Hartnell, perhaps after he'd met the Daleks in an unseen adventure. Could be Pertwee,



on a mission for the Time Lords. Could be Capaldi, tying up loose ends from his fractured past. Could be Cushing, for all we know. Added to the fact that it's 1963, but clearly not November as the clocks haven't gone back, we're left with plenty of get-outs to make it all sit right if we care, and fairly nice callbacks if we don't.

Even the appearance of Terry's Davros at the end feels like a treat, not slavish continuity – there's a wonderful moment where it feels like the Battle Computer might be Davros, only to be a cheat. I do wonder if any new viewers, playing catch up, expect it to be Davros at first. Perhaps the voice gives away the fact it isn't.

But most of all, the best thing about *Remembrance* is the relationship between the Seventh Doctor and Ace. Easily overlooked is that this adventure immediately follows *Dragonfire*, in which they first meet. Here, Sylvester and Sophie just have a wonderful easy chemistry on screen, because of

course they've kept in touch, probably done an event or two together, and quickly established a good rapport. They feel like they've been travelling together for years. Perhaps they have; but, neither Big Finish nor BBC books have ever, to mine or my friends' knowledge, looked at that gap. I asked Andrew Cartmel, who kindly and rapidly responded:

Hi Cliff, to be honest I never gave it a hell of a lot of thought. But their relationship does seem to have matured considerably between Dragonfire and Remembrance. Certainly the thinking of the writing team had! (You can quote me on that...) I'd love to write a comic about their adventures, and maybe I'll pitch one...thank you for planting the idea with me!

So there you go.

I wish more people had seen *Remembrance* when it went out, that it had gone out at a Saturday tea-time, or that it had even had a repeat on Sunday's, pre or post Narnia. It eclipses pretty much everything since *The Caves of Androzani*, and a good deal before that too. It's the best Dalek story since *Genesis* by miles – those Renegades might wobble on the cobbles a little, but they're properly finished and well shot. It's fantastic to see the new Imperials, the Special Weapons Dalek, the 60s Emperor, and the "real life" shuttle.

Day of the Daleks was out to buy through the young VHS market, and would have been an easy, cheap rent. Much like *Rose* drew massively on the whole tone of *Spearhead from Space*, above and beyond the Autons, *Remembrance* gives Doctor Who a massive and much needed kick up the arse courtesy of inspiration from Uncles Terrance, Dick and Barry. Group Captain Gilmore is a perfect Brig analogue, far more the early version than the later comic buffoon, and with much more presence and severity than Faraday, Beresford or Archer in *Resurrection*. Rachel and Allison fuse Liz Shaw, Barbara Wright, Jo Grant and Corporal Bell. There's a Mike Yates-

cum-Mike Smith; handsome, ladies' man, ultimately treacherous. And that's the final big *Remembrance* connection for me. I'm not quite a Manxman but spending over twenty years of my life there has given me a strong link to the Isle of Man, and Dursley McClinden is one of very few Manx people involved in Doctor Who in over fifty years, and possibly the only on-screen example. Friends in my old local group went to school with Dursley. I've often secretly wondered if the Big Finish conCounter Measures series could do with continuing the tradition of a Manxman onside...

But that's a little pipe dream.

Remembrance has turned up on DVD twice, the latter Extra Special Edition being particularly pleasing after being given short shrift on The Dalek Tapes documentary. Released on video with the charming but shoddy-as-hell *The Chase* in 1993, it has consistently sat in the upper end of polls. Even if you're dismissive of the McCoy era, it's pretty hard to deny what a gutsy, clever and well-made piece of television it is. It's got a heart, a rollicking, beating, pumping action adventure where deaths matter and the consequences are seen – but more importantly, it's got a brain. For the first time in years, Doctor Who is saying something. It's exciting, intelligent, a perfect soft reboot or jumping-on point.

Less than six million viewers watched *Remembrance of the Daleks*; an acceptable figure these days, but low then against the behemoth of *Coronation Street*.

The kids missed it. They didn't care.

Apart from this one. ▲

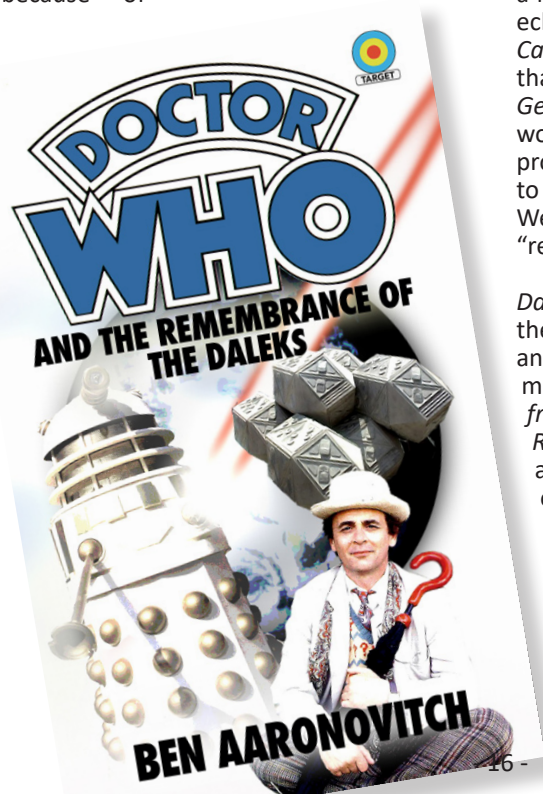


THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

by Dan Barratt

In more recent years, Graeme Curry, the writer of *The Crooked Smile* – the story that was eventually to become 1988's Seventh Doctor story, *The Happiness Patrol* – has sought to downplay the connections with Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative government of the time. The story even became the subject of an item on the BBC's current affairs programme, *Newsnight*, in 2010 as part of a wider discussion of political bias at the Corporation, something successive governments have continually pored over. Doctor Who has always acted as something of a lens through which we might examine the ideas, preoccupations and politics of the time (I can heartily recommend the Nicholas Pegg-authored documentary on the BBC DVD release of *The Happiness Patrol* which explores this aspect of the series very eloquently). Curry, meanwhile, points out that his story is not intended to imply that Mrs. Thatcher might be guilty of the systematic subjugation and murder of her people – such an idea is patently absurd – but, in comparing *The Happiness Patrol's* ideas with the politics of the time, I believe we may reveal more about the story's true message.

The Happiness Patrol has its roots in the prescient writing of Orwell and Wells and, like those great grandfathers of science fiction, Curry's vision was drawn from the concerns of the time in which it was written. Britain had, for some eight years, been governed by the Conservative Party, under the leadership of the country's first female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Elected in 1979, the Party had come to power in a nation crippled by strikes and high unemployment. Mrs. Thatcher's dynamic style of leadership seemed startling. Nobody had experienced her brand of tough womanhood either in business or in politics before and it seemed a million miles away from the stuffy gentlemen's club politics of old. Her image



represented a new kind of dynamism which became instantly popular, promising a new age of national happiness and prosperity, an idea that was firmly imbedded in the new Prime Minister's inaugural speech: 'Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith. And where there is despair, may we bring hope.' This public show of strength and dynamic purpose is something that we see echoed in Sheila Hancock's Helen A. and, like Curry's fictional leader, Mrs. Thatcher's political career was the embodiment of detailed stage management; from the fastidiously coiffed hair to the meticulously worded speeches intoned in mannered precision, made possible by hours of elocution lessons.

A second term in office was won in 1983 after a timely conflict with Argentina over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, an event on which, arguably, Mrs. Thatcher was able to capitalise, appropriating notions of national pride, valour and victory to throw her 'Iron Lady' image into even harsher relief. Indeed, in the face of criticism of her handling of the affair, Mrs. Thatcher was heard to command, 'Just rejoice at that news and congratulate our forces and the marines. Rejoice.' This rallying cry for celebration, dictator in its tone and content, is of course not a whole lot different to the endless rhetoric of Helen A. who constantly strives to equate happiness with decency and moral fibre. In her worldview, sadness becomes a euphemism for weakness of spirit and moral decline.

In the coming years of office, the Conservative Party would place at its core the values of the 'traditional' family model in the arguably misguided belief that, by somehow extolling the notion of a putative moral ideal of a halcyon bygone era, the country might be coaxed away from some inescapable age of depravity. Undeniably, one of the most damaging pieces of legislation to emerge from this misguided 'crusade' would be the iniquitous Clause 28, an amendment to the Local Government Act in Britain, which banned the positive portrayal of homosexuality in schools. In effect the clause played upon a kind of draconian, misguided fear that homosexuality was

something that might be 'caught' if discussed in the classroom and these fears were rather neatly juxtaposed with stylized images of the 'healthy' nuclear family. Whilst Curry's script does not seek perhaps to discuss these ideas – contentious as they were at the time – there are several examples of these themes being deployed on a subtextual level. Rather deliciously, whilst Helen A. proudly declares to Gilbert M. 'families are very important for people's happiness', it is later revealed that it is in the arms of the very same man that Joseph C., her somewhat emasculated husband, clearly finds his own true happiness. There are also other gay references in the story: Priscilla P.'s ironic misappropriation of the phrase 'I am what I am' references Fierstein and Herman's La Cage Aux Folles and – as highlighted by some commentators – an early execution scene in which a poor miscreant is led to his death clad in dark overalls revealing a triangular patch of pink t-shirt beneath.

The 1980s has come to represent, in many ways, a decade of wealth and excess. Much of that wealth was derived from a steady programme of privatisation of national industries, a model which has continued to this day. The steady doctrine of wrestling of power from the hands of the trades' unions was epitomised in the Tories' bitter dispute with the country's miners which, in 1984, would result in a year-long strike headed by unionist Arthur Scargill. In opposing the strikers the Prime Minister presented herself with characteristic militancy, implacably remarking, 'We had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands. We always have to be aware of the enemy within, which is much more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty.' Following this effective 'declaration of war' the government declared the strikes illegal. An echo of this can be seen in the second episode of *The Happiness Patrol* which opens with a group of workers who have taken to the streets in order to protest about the working conditions in the colony's food factories. One demonstrator bares a placard which ironically reads, 'Factory Conditions Are A Joke!'. Helen A.'s response is to order the protest be dispersed and the workers 'disappeared'.

The Happiness Patrol has much to say about the dangers of fakery and pretence in death; from Helen A.'s denial to accept murder for what it really is – her pride in adopting recommendations on 'population control' and her frequent use of the word 'disappearance' – to the epiphany of the snipers in episode two. The Kandyman itself, dispensing death by sweet overindulgence, is simply an embodiment of sanitised killing. The Patrol's ghastly painted faces, garish pink costumes and pantomime guns all serve this same purpose: to shroud the reality of what they really are. Members are awarded badges of honour for the numbers they have killed, each eagerly jostling to move up the alphabetical nomenclature imposed from above. Ace befriends one of their number, Susan Q. who, in one of the serial's genuinely touching scenes, reveals her horror at the realization of it all: 'I woke up one morning and suddenly realised I couldn't go on. Smiling while my friends disappeared. Trying to pretend I'm something I'm not. I woke up one morning and realised it was all over.' She is talking, of course, about suicide.

In 1987, with the Tory government winning a third term in office, many were beginning to believe them invulnerable. The country seemed ever more blighted by class division with many feeling, through their own perceived lack of voice or opportunity, ignored (much as the poor pipe dwellers cowering in the shadows on Terra Alpha). The common person's perception of a Prime Minister out of touch with the feelings and concerns of the average man in the street was reinforced in an interview Mrs. Thatcher gave for the magazine, *Woman's Own*: "'I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!' or... 'I am homeless, the Government must house me!' and so they are casting their problems on society...'" This may be compared with one of the closing scenes in *The Happiness Patrol* where, deserted by her husband and desperate to escape unnoticed, Helen A. explains her rationale: '...they laughed sometimes, but they still cried, they still wept...and those that persisted had to be punished...for the good of the majority, for the

ones that wanted to be happy, who wanted to take the opportunities I gave them.' As the scene progresses, her yearning becomes ever more vitriolic: 'I'll go somewhere else. I'll find somewhere where there is no sadness. A place where people know how to enjoy themselves...a place where people are strong, where they hold back the tears. A place where people pull themselves together.' As with the common perception of Mrs. Thatcher, Helen A. is a leader only for the strong. There is no place in her world view for people needing help, encouragement or understanding. We know, of course, that her dream is merely an absurdity. As the Doctor says, happiness can only exist side by side with sadness. Just as her idea of 'happiness' is merely an obfuscation of the truth, so her life is nothing but a sham. Similarly, her denial of the people's right to live their lives as fully rounded human beings, to reach out and help one another or simply to display genuine emotions, is an abomination.

But, here is the irony at the centre of *The Happiness Patrol*: Helen A. is not intrinsically evil. She is simply misguided, albeit irretrievably so. Her wickedness grew organically from an original intention to do good. Her crime was to lose sight of humanity, to forget the very people she was meant to protect. In June 1987, just as the Tory Party emerged victoriously from the general election, the pop band Tears for Fears penned the lyrics, 'Politician granny with your high ideals, have you no idea how the majority feels?' The Seeds Of Love wouldn't be released for another two years when it would finally emerge as a damning appraisal of a detached Prime Minister in her final months of office. Climbing into a shiny black car outside the door of Number 10, she may even have uttered something akin to the parting words of Helen A.: 'They didn't understand me. I only wanted what was best for them.'

So, what makes *The Happiness Patrol* such a great story? The way it manages to embrace a longstanding tradition in Doctor Who lore, the allegory, but delivers its dark message in a loud, brash, often outlandish way that encapsulates the ethos and drive of the McCoy era in a nutshell. ▲

SWEET JAZZ by Kamael HeruurSmith

In the Red Dwarf episode *Inquisitor*, Dave Lister is asked to justify his existence by a deranged, self-righteous, crazy robot that considers itself the judge, jury and executioner of all sentient life (long story). Lister's response to the Inquisitor's demand is 'Spin on it!' In writing a piece about *Silver Nemesis*, or any Sylvester McCoy story for that matter, I feel rather like Lister, because inherent in discussing this story, and indeed this era of the series, is an awareness of the 'Inquisitors' within fandom, staring beady-eyed down their gun barrels, with their finger on the trigger, daring anyone to justify their enjoyment of these episodes.

Well, I'm sorry about it, but I find the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary story, *Silver Nemesis*, a lot of fun! Since the 2005 revival of Doctor Who we've come to experience Christmas Specials, and episodes marking important milestones, as being very different in tone from the standard episodes in the series. The specials tend to be big, bold, brassy, 'crowd pleasing' events to appeal to a wider audience than the regular weekly viewers. Because of this, the Christmas special episodes can seem somewhat strange in style and content when watched next to an episode of the regular weekly series. I think after ten years of the new show, however, we probably know what we're in for in a Christmas special.

Back in 1988, though, this wasn't the case. If there was an anniversary episode, we expected (and wanted?) it to be a regular Doctor Who story, but with smatterings of the programme's past thrown in for nostalgia's sake. Past Doctors; continuity references; returning foes and a sense of fondness and respect for the show's utter brilliance and longevity. *Silver Nemesis*, however, would fit better into the new series Christmas special pantheon. It's basically taking the proverbial out of fan expectations.

It has some of the references to the show's past that we expect from the anniversary

nature of the story, but it also has the larger than life, unapologetically flamboyant exuberance that we'd expect of a new series Christmas special. If you look at its structure, it is made up of set pieces, quirky guest appearances and a travelogue nature that could sit next to *Voyage of the Damned*, *The Husbands of River Song* and *The Christmas Invasion*.

Comparing it to the Christmas specials of the new series is not to necessarily say it is 'brilliant' (as has been noted many times, it's perhaps too similar to the great *Remembrance of the Daleks* to be assessed solely on its own storyline merits), but it is certainly a fun, pleasing romp. It's a light-hearted escapade, setting up the mystery surrounding the Doctor's past and his identity that would start to be explored before the show bit the dust a year or so later. Of course not everyone likes their Doctor Who in 'light-hearted, let's have fun' mode. Indeed, I personally would not find the series a satisfying ongoing experience if it was like this (or the Christmas specials) week after week.

However, one can enjoy the way *Silver Nemesis* says 'Stick it!' to fan expectations by its non-traditional elements, as much one can love the Philip Hinchcliffe era, or the Graham Williams era, or the Verity Lambert era etc. Doctor Who has such huge differences in its style and content over its long history and I believe that fact should be celebrated rather than decried.

In the McCoy era it is certainly true to say that whether one enjoys it or not, the series was bravely exploring myriad options for its future style going into the nineties (if it had continued). From the self-aware 'social issues stage play'-like quality of *The Happiness Patrol*, to the attempts to bring emotion and depth to the companion via Ace, to the powerful and complex plotting in *The Curse of Fenric* and *Remembrance of the Daleks* and, of course, the already mentioned light-hearted romps such as *Silver Nemesis* and *Delta and the Bannermen*, Doctor Who

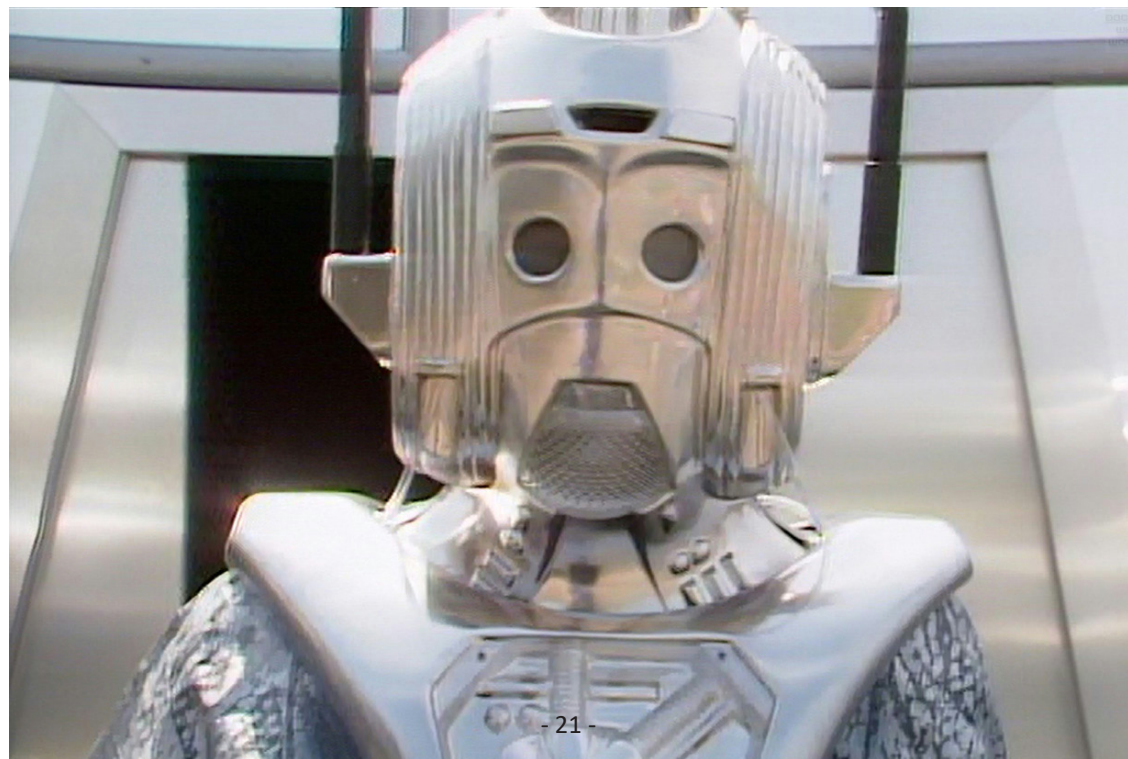
was going through an extraordinary growth period of change and, above all, freshness.

At this point in the show's history, the audience wasn't going to get the oft-mentioned 'grittiness and violence' of the mid-seventies seasons, but as Doctor Who had been there and done that before, and wonderfully, did it really need to keep on doing it forever? The Hinchcliffe era of Doctor Who used to be showcased in the horror magazine *Fangoria* as the apogee of Doctor Who. For Doctor Who to be almost the antithesis of the earlier horror style during the McCoy era must have been galling for people for whom darkness and violence were the elements of the drama of the show that they enjoyed the most. But after the controversy of the violence in Colin Baker's first season on the show, experimentation was required to try other ways of creating jeopardy, drama and entertainment.

The quality that I found so endearing and powerfully resonant in the Seventh Doctor's era was the sense of melancholy, pathos and sadness about the human condition that

can be found in many beautiful moments between the Doctor and Ace and even the antagonists (such as in *Dragonfire*). Though there aren't many of these moments in *Silver Nemesis*, there is an underlying quality of mutual understanding and respect in the relationship between the Doctor and Ace. Their clowning around, having a great time in each other's company before the poo hits the fan (or the gold hits the chest unit) shows the energy and rapport between Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred.

If you've seen this story you'll know all of its elements without me having to lay them out for you. What may be missing, for many fans who write this story off as 'crap', is an ability to chill out, lighten up and enjoy it for the fun that is at its core. Have a beer, put your feet up and don't be a Cyberman who can be confused by the irrational and chaotic tones of jazz music. Instead, lay back on a grassy field listening to sweet music, put your thumb out to hitch a ride in a limo and ride to destiny. But most of all, ask 'Doctor who? Have you ever wondered?' No, not from Dorian, from Lady Peinforte. ▲



MEMORY OF A FREE FESTIVAL

by James Gent

One of the toughest lessons I learned as a Doctor Who fan was forsaking the Sylvester McCoy era of Doctor Who before it had really got on its feet. I had just started grammar school, puberty had just kicked in, and supporting Doctor Who through the death throes of Seasons 22 and 23 had given me fan fatigue. The fact that, when it came back in 1987, it looked like Galloping Galaxies, didn't help.

As a result of this, I didn't experience the majority of the Seventh Doctor and Ace's adventures until I'd shaken off those adolescent affectations of 'maturity' and returned to the well as a result of BBC2's Doctor Who Night and those UK Gold weekend morning repeats. I began filling in those gaps in my Who-education with great joy, as I was surprised to discover just how fresh and modern the McCoy era's style of storytelling felt in the early twenty-first century. It had not only arrested the terminal decline of the show's mid-80s creative inertia, but also turned the whole show on its head, with postmodern games, a very clear debt to the new wave of British comics, multilayered and highly conceptual stories once again to the fore, and of course a winning Doctor and companion combo.

The Greatest Show in The Galaxy was the last of those missing jigsaw pieces for me to complete, as recently as 2005. And what a revelation! This reinforced what I had already witnessed in stories such as *Paradise Towers*, *Remembrance of the Daleks* and *Ghost Light* - that this Doctor had his eye on the prize, making deliberate trips to such remote outlands as the satellite world of Terra Alpha, Windsor, Shoreditch, Maidens Point or Perivale, as part of a bigger game of cosmic one-upmanship with dark, preternatural forces, agents of chaos threatening the balance. And so he whisks his clown-averse, proactive chum Ace to

Segonax for a confrontation with the Gods of Ragnarok, although not before there's time to fit in Sylvester McCoy's cabaret routine.

Granted, the first episode is shadowed by the ghost of Keeper of Traken Part One, where our heroes take precisely 24 minutes to arrive at their designated locale, but there's some humour in seeing the TARDIS invaded – not by a spooky bloke in a chair, or the jackal-faced visage of Sutekh, but spam! Electronic junk mail! – and the sight of the Fourth Doctor's massive scarf casually draped over Sophie Aldred.

The episode sees the Doc and Ace slowly make their way to the Psychic Circus, prior to encountering a rogue's gallery whose number includes TV's Adrian Mole and sitcom gorgon Peggy Mount. As with the interminable road trip sequences in *Silver Nemesis* there is a certain innocent joy in this padding as, for the first time since Doc 4 and Sarah Jane, it's a pleasure to spend time in the company of a TARDIS team who genuinely enjoy one another's company, and we, the viewers, feel included in that.

The story gets underway in its own sweet time, as one of the notable qualities of the McCoy era is that while stories are a bit weak on coherent structure and narrative, they fizz with ideas and invention. I'm a big fan of exploratory drama that doesn't bother with such mundane ideas as plot beats, but just takes ideas for a walk in the park, and this is something the McCoy era excels at, purely because each story has an abundance of themes and ideas to capture the imagination. Watertight, A to B plots are for Midsomer Murders; this – as has been mentioned before – is TV for the VHS and DVD age, where non-linear storytelling gets a free pass due to the availability of repeated viewings. You may not be able to quote chapter and verse on the details of the story, but you'll surely have the Chief Clown's hearse gliding through the desert, Bellboy being crushed to death by his mechanical men, or a kite trailing the sky imprinted into your memory. It's a story of snapshots and motifs, a tone poem, something designed to



evoke a melancholy, dream-like impression of a small world of failed dreams, decadence and artifice, and lost hopes. This is the world of the Psychic Circus. Does it represent the failure of the flower power era's prophecy of the Age of Aquarius to come to fruition? Is it a metaphor for the state of Doctor Who in the 1980s (many words have been spilled on this interpretation, look it up!)? As with any non-linear text, all readings are equally valid.

In this case, the plot – such as it is – is secondary to the world of the denizens of the Psychic Circus, its enigmatic overlords, its ragtag band of doomed visitors and the Circus' hippyish outcasts. They all represent something but it's left to the viewer to do the heavy lifting, returning us back to an age of mainstream TV drama where the viewer was encouraged to level up rather than dumb down. And it's brilliant.

Doctor Who, as it would frequently do during the McCoy era, is playing with types, archetypes and symbols – there's even a quest for an amulet, reinforcing the Fisher King/Holy Grail motif of such disparate bedfellows as *Battlefield*, *Remembrance of the Daleks*, *Silver Nemesis* and *The Curse of Fenric*. And remember: the resolution of the very first McCoy story, *Time and the Rani*,

depended on the substance Loyhargil. Why that's an anagram of...how interesting!

I haven't given any praise as yet to the skilful performances of McCoy and Aldred, finding their feet as a twosome so memorable they would inspire a half-decade of original novels in the wake of the series' resting; Jessica Martin as the vulnerable vulpine Mags; TP McKenna's grandstanding turn as an intergalactic colonial; and erstwhile *EastEnders* bad boy Ian Reddington's chillingly still, Bowiesque Pierrot, or indeed the ingenuity of the production team under the auspices of the resourceful John Nathan-Turner, determined not to have a Shada Mk II on his watch, getting the story made after an asbestos scare saw the show forcibly decamped from TV Centre. These stories have all been told elsewhere. I am here to sing the praises of a story that, budget limitations aside, looked modern then and feels modern now; a new mode of storytelling for Doctor Who, part of its late-blooming reinvention. Sadly this was too late to save the series' ailing fortunes in the eyes of the general public and the indifference of the top floor of the Beeb, but it's a legacy we enjoy to this day in the Moffat produced series, its original fiction, and its audio dramas. The greatest show in the galaxy? It might well be. ▲





BATTLEFIELD: FAN BATTLES OVER AVALLON by Michael S Collins

When people criticise Battlefield, they tend to think of some ropey battle effects, a rare mistiming from Sylvester McCoy ('There will be no battle here!' he yells, still in rehearsal mode) and the famous 'Boom! Boom!' scene. However, you can judge any story by the bits that go wrong. Why would a story in which an actor accidentally breaks the fourth wall, which has an unconvincing monster prop, and in which the main actor falls over at one point be considered the greatest Doctor Who story of all time? And yet, we've just described *The Caves of Androzani*.

For Battlefield itself has a lot going for it. The villains, for one. Jean Marsh always had a good line in chilling villains, as anyone who watched *The Eagle Has Landed* multiple times with their grandfather would attest! Her Morgaine is an ethical monster, murdering soldiers and restoring sight to the blind in equal measure, full of shades of grey and unrequited love and the thirst of great vengeance. That her son is more of a stock character is purely due to the charm and presence Marsh brings.

A presence which is also exhibited by the Destroyer himself. He only shows up for a few scenes, which seem to stretch the

budget to their limits, and is a great character in himself. A destroyer of worlds, who seems less the obvious monster and more a world-weary chap. 'Oh bother, I'm here again, better start destroying...' It's never explained how Morgaine managed to entrap the Destroyer in the first place, but these things are better left to the viewer's imagination. The scenes of the creature gloomily standing in the old castle, getting ready to destroy the planet, just because, have a looming menace to them.

And they bring in the main, great, aspect to the show. It's the Brigadier! In a story which was originally going to kill off the character, Nicholas Courtney is clearly having a ball. He goes from retired shopper, who can't resist the lure of the old emergency drama, to the old timer who thinks he's in a drama where the old timer heroically sacrifices himself so the good guys can win the day. Thankfully, of course, the producer got cold feet on that death scene, and just as well, because, in this post-Nicholas Courtney world, could you imagine how difficult that would be to watch now? Instead, the Brigadier gets to march in, charm everyone in the show one last time, save the day via 'Get off my world', and then ride off into the sunset, to tend to his bloody massive gardens.

I do, in particular, like the scene where the Doctor threatens Mordred to get Morgaine to call off her troops, only for her to read his mind and say the Doctor would be unable to unleash the killing blow, so the bluff is meaningless. The Brigadier then steps forward to carry it out, and Jean Marsh

declares that they need to 'Beware this man. He is steeped in blood.' The story is at pains to remind us that while we, the fans, have a cuddly image of the Brigadier, because of who he is, in the reality of the story, this is a career soldier who was risen all the way up the ranks, and has a colder side to him as a result.

That Nick Courtney can pull off both sides of the same character, and still remain the lovable old Brig in the fan conscience, is a testament to his skills as an actor.

There is plenty more to enjoy about Battlefield: the nuclear sub-plot, suggesting greater perils than even the BBC budget can afford; the underwater base scenes, even if they nearly killed off Sophie Aldred in the process; the concept of the future Doctor being Merlin (McCoy's reading of, 'I should have given myself more warning!' never fails to get a laugh here); and many of the smaller characters are well sketched and performed, including a nice performance by the late Jimmy Ellis as an excited archaeologist. My wife, Mandy, also points out that there was great research done to be as accurate in the folklore as possible.

When my grandfather died, we all appeared at mum's. This is what folk do when someone dies, they congregate, in a mutual sign of, well, 'are you okay?' As you can imagine, lots of inane chatter happens, until someone stumbled across the idea of putting on some Doctor Who. Now, what sort of story is acceptable viewing when your only surviving grandfather is no more? *The Caves of Androzani* is a bit too gritty, and there's a matter of taste. We put on *Battlefield*, and it certainly cheered everyone up no end. After all, the combination of Arthurian legend, hard SF, nuclear gloom and the Brigadier is hard to hate. It has an infectious glow to it.

And so, after four episodes, we did have something to say beyond inane chatter. We could talk about how much we'd all enjoyed the story.

And it is a highly enjoyable story. It's the enjoyable story in a season of great stories. Should we look down on it because it lacks Norse codes, or the Master, or the atmosphere of *Ghost Light*? No, because it's not meant to have all of that. What it does have is its own thing. It goes its own way. And within that own way, it has more than enough moments of greatness to be considered an equal partner in the Indian Summer of the Seventh Doctor's TV run. ▲



GHOST LIGHT

As the Light 'Declined'

by Allan Lear

Those halcyon days of summer, eh? One of the joys of an annual like this is shared nostalgia. We all come together in blissful remembrance of those carefree childhood days when Doctor Who was what we ate, drank and breathed. The long and aching weeks between episodes, painful but tinged with pleasure because the anticipation lived in us like the tingle of cold fingers at a fireside...

It's winter again now, and here in the northwest of England the wind is howling outside the door. The rain on the windows raps out an insistent staccato like an ice-cream headache in the back of my mind, and I'm huddled for warmth around a blazing fire of old Star Trek novelisations (I ran out of Torchwood books last week). Summer, like my youth, seems to have fallen out of sight down the decades, into the crepuscular realm of forgotten things, into desuetude.

What could be a better time, then, for a revisiting of *Ghost Light*? Set in the draughty halls of an old Victorian manse, focussing as it does on the gradual collapse of intellect into insanity and dementia, *Ghost Light* is the perfect story for a cold winter's day when one is feeling bereft and abandoned by friends, hope and one's declining faculties. It even comes from a period when Doctor Who itself was winding down, the last story of the classic series to be filmed and the antepenultimate episode to be broadcast.

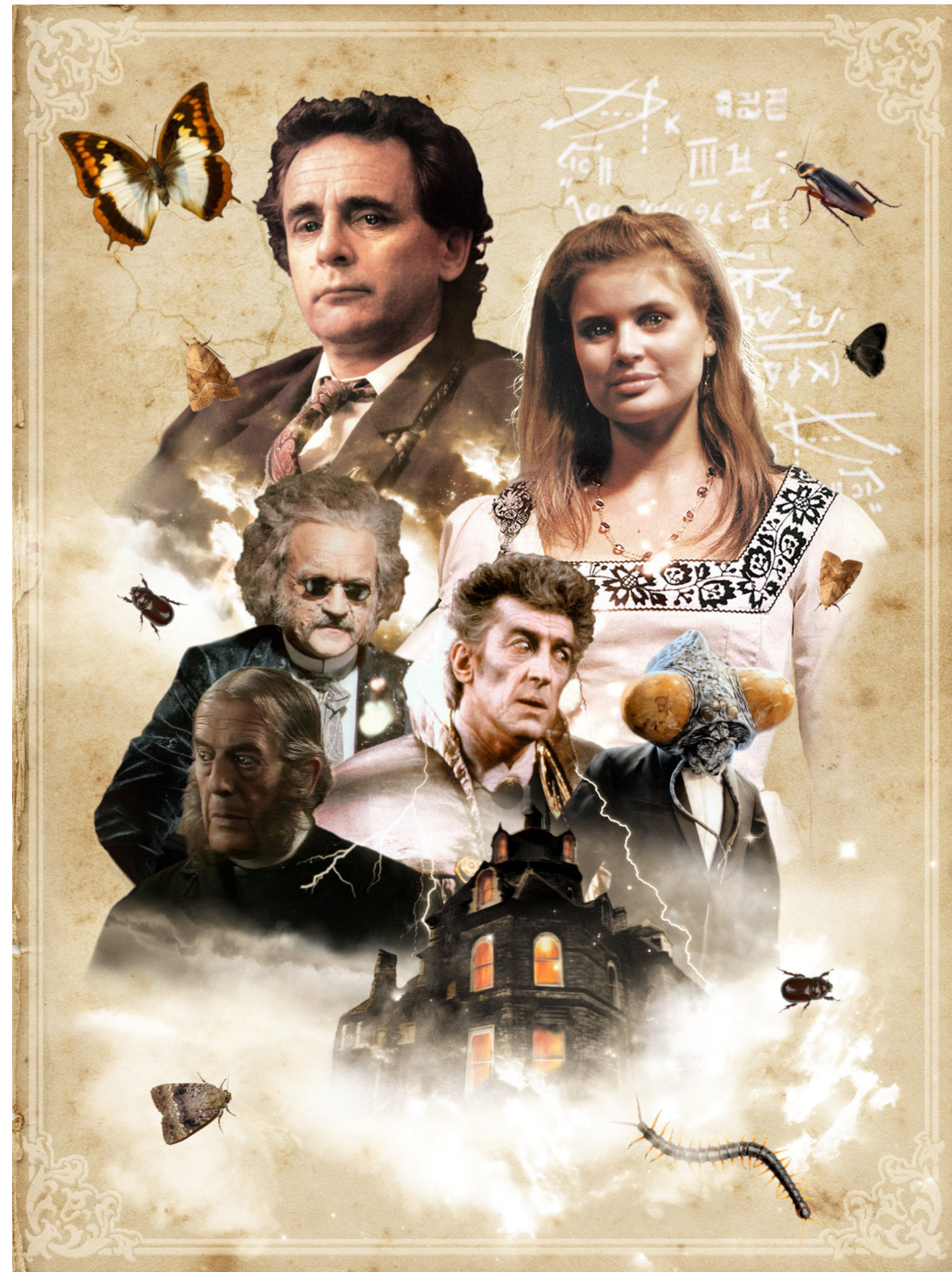
Ghost Light has a somewhat tattered reputation, as episodes go. Mostly it is famous for being incomprehensible. Perhaps it was a mistake to produce such a demanding story right at the end of a budgetary period; rumours have abounded in fanland ever since that Marc Platt's original script – which, in an initial form rejected by John Nathan-Turner, also contained enough material to spin off into semi-mythical New Adventure

Lungbarrow – was slashed back from four episodes to three, the extreme density of the story being adduced as evidence for this. Either way, the demands of a complex set and some vital creature effects clearly overstretched the poor show's ever-diminishing budget, and as a consequence we see some of the major bugbears of the Who critic, with wobbly sets and some dodgy effect work coming as somewhat retrograde steps. This was particularly noticeable when followed in broadcast order by the sweep and grandeur of the location shooting in *The Curse of Fenric*, which makes *Ghost Light*'s claustrophobic setting seem very tawdry and bottom-drawer in comparison.

However, the charge of incomprehensibility is mainly levelled at the script. We've seen similar complaints raised in recent years, not least against last season's standout standalone episode, *Heaven Sent*, and what they all boil down to is a simple proposition: Doctor Who has no business trying to be clever.

I can partially appreciate where people are coming from with this. Who is, after all, a children's show first and foremost, and I absolutely agree that there is no place for material in the show that would be inappropriate for family viewing (so long as we bear in mind that most young family members rather enjoy a good death scene or a rousing section of justified and satisfying violence). And I am not a parent, nor have I any wish to be, so I cannot claim to speak for adults who find themselves in the astonishing and ambivalent situation of nurturing new life. All I can say is that if I were raising a child of my own, I cannot be entirely certain that I would want to screen entertainment from him on the grounds that he was too stupid to understand it.

Besides, this complaint is generally raised as a question of averages. "The average child would have difficulty understanding this episode". Well...so what? The *average* child doesn't watch Doctor Who. The *average* child obsesses over football or plays with dollies. Doctor Who fans are not your



average children: they are bright, inquisitive, bold, curious, analytical, creative, passionate, imaginative, thoughtful, deep, exigent, and probably a nuisance. Show me an *average* child and I'll show you a sort of high-speed obstacle; but, as the Lamplighter School have ably demonstrated in our mother publication Celestial Toyroom, appreciation of Doctor Who – like Lake Wobegon – is a territory where all the children are above average.

Ghost Light comes from the Cartmel era and, in many ways, typifies it. Andrew Cartmel took over scriptwriting duties when the BBC was treating Who like every government for the past forty years has treated the NHS – slowly starving it for money in the hope that it'll die off. Where script writers on some shows had the luxury of throwing narrative to the wind and letting the special effects plug all the holes, Cartmel doubled-down on the one resource he had control over: the writing. Cartmel-era scripts, especially in this final classic series, are notable for their depth of story and for their wholehearted embrace of the show's inbuilt capacity for showcasing big, fancy ideas by discussing them in the presence of a man in a rubber monster hat. Not since Sidney Newman's initial conception of Who as a historical primer had it lived up so completely to its potential as an oasis of cognitive challenge in a televisual desert of adverts, soap operas, and rubbish eighties game shows hosted by Jim Davidson and other known wife-beaters.

Unashamed cerebration is rare at any time on television and even rarer on children's television, but *Ghost Light* pulls no punches and it announces its qualifications as a no-holds-barred ruminant-a-thon right from the off. The opening sequence shows us a man of the cloth laughingly rebuking the "new" evolutionary theories that he has patently not understood, and the cruel irony with which he is reverse-evolved into a simian character as punishment for his effrontery.

Unpack that for a moment. This is a children's show – and the first five minutes require the child watching firstly to know what evolution is, secondly to understand the

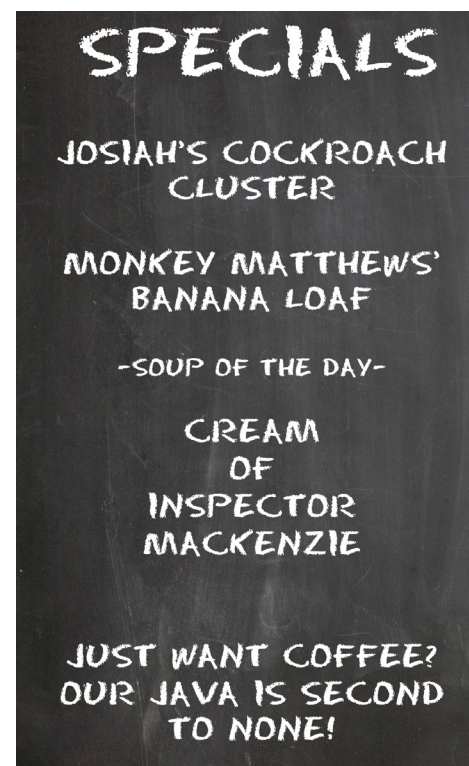
priest's objection to it, thirdly to understand that the priest's objection is incorrect, and fourthly, to appreciate irony to a level where the backwards mutation of the cleric is not only a valid sanction but an apposite one, a comeuppance.

Where else on TV, even back in the 1980s when quality was perhaps still an ostensible aim of those making television programmes, would you find a programme that places such absolute and unquestioning faith in the intelligence of its viewership? Especially a viewership that has to have a glass of milk and go to bed before the watershed? In a medium that has been engaged in a headlong plummet to the depths of indolent ignorance from the moment it was invented, for a despised minority audience, Cartmel and Platt made a conscious decision to buck all established televisual mores and assume that not everybody in the country is a drooling imbecile. Phrased like that, it doesn't sound as courageous a decision as it was; maybe at this point I should inject the words "Michael Grade" so you get what I'm talking about. It's so easy to give up when facing seemingly insurmountable odds; the sheer ambition of *Ghost Light* is a small rebellion that the Doctor himself could be proud of.

For all the problems with wobbly sets and slapstick design, some of the other traditional flaws of the overambitious Who production are noticeable by their absence. The acting is of a very high standard, harking back to the sixties and Philip Hinchcliffe's era when the casting policy was to get proper character actors in rather than celebrity turns. McCoy himself, not an actor per se when cast, has found his feet and has developed his Doctor into the enigmatic, capricious, calculating and wholly captivating Number Seven we all remember from *Remembrance* and the New Adventures. Michael Cochrane is poorly-served by a somewhat exaggerated caricature of madness in the script's character of Redvers; but, on the other hand, he was cast well, because it takes an actor of Cochrane's exceptional calibre to get such a part on camera and make it believable to the audience. John Hallam's petulant and effete

Light is a study in how to make a scene-stealing villain without descending into pantomimics, and the quiet dignity of Carl Forgione's Nimrod is beautifully pitched and in striking juxtaposition to the butler's quasi-bestial features. Sophie Aldred, meanwhile, completes her series-long tour de force which has cemented the "young girl discovers her true depths" arc as a staple of *Doctor Who* companionships ever since. Even at this late stage, innovation had not yet been strangled.

The fire is guttering now in the grate, and the pile of Star Trek novels is running low, which is a mixed blessing. The night encroaches on all sides. Even the rain has stopped and the wind has died down. Light has failed and the sun has set, just as it set on the Empire of *Ghost Light*. I can watch the ashes of my fireside in the faint hope that something new will be born from them but, without challenge and cerebration, without the exigent and the bold, I will be watching in vain. ▲



'We play the contest again...Time Lord!'

Layers of Norse mythology and Nazi iconography, the imagery of vampire folktales and the rich language of the King James Bible, all added to our own mythologising of the Second World War, have already established this as an epic confrontation. And then, with two words, Fenric takes it to a whole new level.

The truth about the success of Sylvester McCoy's time as the Doctor, and Andrew Cartmel's time as his script editor, is that in three years they've managed to reinvest a whole weight of meaning into those two words: 'Time Lord'.

This isn't about big collars any more, nor a planet that looks like an airport lounge, nor interminable trial scenes. This is about gods and monsters, a confrontation between universal powers. By removing the Doctor's people, the series has made them great again, mysterious and powerful as they were in *The War Games*.

By addressing the Doctor as 'Time Lord', Fenric is announcing himself as a 'player'; but he's also investing the Doctor and, by extension, his race with similar levels of kudos.

The scene is set here for the 'New Adventures' with their long arc about the Dark Time of ancient Gallifrey; and for the Time War; and for all of the post-2005 series.

This is the genius of *The Curse of Fenric*: that it is *transformative*. Remaking the Doctor as a force of nature with a human face and a question-mark tank-top. Rebuilding the faded grandeur of the Gallifrey mythos. Retrospectively taking the disparate stories of the Seventh Doctor's era and weaving them into a narrative, what would today be called a story arc. References to 'Cybermen' and 'Iceworld' ingeniously give the impression



that all this is and was part of a larger plan, a bigger story.

Even the chance reordering of the series – making *Ghost Light*, *Fenric* and *Survival* into a loose trilogy about Ace, covering thematically her past, present and future – strengthens both Ace's own character and the Doctor's, giving a real sense that he has been 'fixing' her mysterious past in order to prepare her for the confrontation with Fenric (and only then is able to return her 'home', in *Survival*).

Perhaps appropriately for such a 'folkloric' story, there are at least three distinct versions of *The Curse of Fenric* (not counting books and audiobooks and the like): the broadcast episodes, with important material cut for time; the long-deleted VHS extended edition that became the one many people were most familiar with; and the even-more-extended but missing the cliff-hangers, episode titles and reprises 'feature-length' edition on the Special Edition DVD.

That nineties Extended Edition, even on dodgy old video cassette, defined Doctor Who for the video age. I'm always startled now, watching the broadcast version, at the bits that are 'missing', the absence of the second confrontation between Jean and Phyllis and Captain Sorin, say (though would we be so comfortable with a Nazi Captain having faith in the Reich as we are with a Communist and his faith in the Revolution?). *Fenric* is a story that rewards re-watching anyway – *Ghost Light* even more so, of course – but by giving extra material to the fans it both established the precedent that led to such a rich line of extras and extended stories on DVD, but also, in practically superseding the broadcast episodes as the 'definitive' (for a while anyway) *The Curse of Fenric*, it was saying that Doctor Who's expanded universe would never be seen as secondary or subsidiary to the television.

Mark Ayres tells us that Nicholas Mallett wanted to make a movie version of *The Curse of Fenric*, but – at least for me – the recorded episodes simply are not it: they

are written and structured as four episodes with climaxes every 25 minutes, each clearly punctuated by a dead thing coming back to life – Part One, one of the Russian soldiers beneath the sea; Part Two, the haemovores doing their iconic emergence from the waves; and Part Three, Dr Judson's body being worn by Fenric himself. The cliff-hangers seem positively overwrought without the crash into the theme tune, and become anti-climactic when they instantly unwind. Even Mark's own score seems to know it, building to crescendos that are then forced to die away.

But the movie version has more *The Curse of Fenric*. Elements particularly key to understanding what happens on the roof of the church in Part Three are there, and the enhanced special effects of Fenric carving himself new Viking runes in the crypt are a joy.

Somewhere out there, perhaps, there is a 'perfect' version of *The Curse of Fenric*, four thirty to thirty-five minute episodes with all the CGI. Such a 'big' story deserves as big a release as possible. Or perhaps the definitive version, like all myths and folklore, is the slightly different one in each of our memories.

But it's also a story full of small, sharply drawn human tales: Miss Hardaker (wonderful Janet Henfrey) – the novel spells it out, but it's clearly implied on screen how she went to Maiden's Point as a girl; Reverend Wainwright (who would have expected Nicholas Parsons to be such a talented actor after all those game show years?) struggling with his own existential crisis; Kathleen Dudman (Cory Pulman) – her life gets smashed by huge forces (the World War, even before Fenric takes an interest) but she's never reduced to a 'woman in fridge' motivation for Ace; Captain Sorin, who sparks a curious and tender relationship with Ace, an unlikely romantic hero in Cold War era 1989 when this was made (played by Polish star Tomek Bork, who had his own history with communists); even the quietly desperate backstory between Commander Millington (Alfred Lynch giving

him a lugubrious brio as both broken and bonkers) and Dr Judson (Dinsdale Landen's extraordinary double performance as both bitter, waspish, sharp-witted Dr Judson and in-love-with-being-psychotic Fenric).

They are all pawns in the game, as the story's imagery keeps telling us. But also remember what Fenric has to say about the pawns.

Hidden in the heart of *The Curse of Fenric* is one of those bootstrap paradoxes that the modern Moffat era is so fond of. Except, of course, this paradox is created by the evil Fenric, the lover of traps, and the Doctor averts it. Ace, obviously, is caught by a paradox of creating her own history. But the one I'm thinking of is the one that spells the doom of the Haemovores: like Ace, Ingiga the Ancient One is caught in the trap of creating her own past. And the Doctor talks her out of the act that will begin the road to the ruin of chemical slime.

Because the bootstrap paradox *is* a trap. It's the one that means you have to follow the path that time has laid down for you. It means that you have no free will. The Doctor changes that by giving the Ancient One a choice. He returns free will to the equation.

Which, obviously, is the solution to his chess puzzle as well. The rules say that the pawns can only follow the path laid down for them. The only way to win is to let them make their own rules. 'Black wins' is meaningless if the pawns are fighting together against the players now.

If *Paradise Towers* marks the turning point, and *Remembrance of the Daleks* is the return to form, then *The Curse of Fenric* is the crowning moment when Doctor Who became immortal. The Doctor takes down a god. And he does it to give free will back to his companion. And to the monster. ▲



SURVIVAL: THE REDEMPTION OF SGT PATERSON

by Ian Wheeler

Reviews of *Survival* invariably focus on the fact that it was the last original Doctor Who story ever made. People will tell you how apt it is that the very first episode, *An Unearthly Child*, deals with the First Doctor's teenage assistant leaving London in the TARDIS to travel the universe whereas *Survival* is about the Seventh Doctor's teenage assistant being brought *back* to her London home in the TARDIS *after* travelling the universe. Oh, I love humans, always seeing patterns in things that aren't there. Nice little coincidences like that aside, it's silly to try and analyze *Survival* as some sort of end to the original run of Doctor Who because it was never designed to be the last adventure and was never structured in that way. Its writer, Rona Munro, has clearly stated in interviews that if she'd known it was going to be the Doctor's last outing she'd have done it in a different way. No, *Survival* was never intended to bring Doctor Who to an end, so let's try and review it for what it is – an ordinary but very good Doctor Who story which was never meant to do anything more than bring Season 26 to a close. And that closing speech from the Doctor, whilst lovely, is just a tagged-on afterthought put there in something of a rush when it became clear that Doctor Who might not be coming back to BBC 1 for a very long time.

So, once we have dismissed the idea of *Survival* as some sort of love letter to 26 years of Doctor Who, what is the story actually about? It might be about any number of things, but to me it is about one thing more than any other. It is the story of one man cracking up and seeing reality (as he sees) it fracture and give way to uncertainty. That man is Sgt Paterson, played very skillfully by Julian Holloway.

Most people know Julian Holloway for his work on the Carry On films and he's pretty

brilliant in those, it must be said. He's also a pretty fine actor generally, with an impressive and varied CV under his belt. In *Survival*, what could have been a fairly two-dimensional character is brought wonderfully to life by this underrated British actor.

Paterson is a bit of a tool, to be honest, when we first meet him in the gym in the youth club. It would be easy to think he has no redeeming qualities. But I for one have never taken a dislike to the character. He's like the stubborn but reliable games teacher you had at school or the inflexible uncle who told you to toughen yourself up. People like this can be difficult to live with sometimes. They see the world in a very narrow way but in fact, in many ways, they mean well. They are not interested in being sensitive or 'getting in touch with your feelings' but often they are the ones who pull people together in life when the going gets tough. When Paterson pushes one of the youngsters in the youth club to 'finish off' the other he certainly comes across a harsh man. But it's his way of helping his students survive in what he sees as a pretty tough world. So anyone who sees Paterson as some sort of villain is missing the point. He's just a man who ends up out of his depth and who lacks the imagination and flexibility to cope when everything he believed about the world he lives in is turned upside down when he meets a wandering Time Lord called the Doctor.

It's not unusual for military and police types to take an instant dislike to the Doctor (*Logopolis* and *Earthshock* are good examples of this) and Paterson is no exception. Paterson has little time for the Doctor when he first meets him and when he later sees him in the street seems to think that he may be some sort of Peeping Tom (not an unreasonable assumption to make in the circumstances).

When Paterson and the Doctor find themselves transported to the alien planet, Paterson is at first unable to deal with the new situation he finds himself in. Truths he has clung on to all his life are suddenly turned on their head. We can imagine

that Paterson is someone who is not into science-fiction and alien worlds, and talking cheetahs are probably something he was not expecting to encounter. After a period of adjustment, though, he copes well. His survival skills complement the Doctor's knowledge and scientific intellect, and for a time it is Paterson that keeps the group of teenagers together and alive.

Back in *Perivale*, Paterson's way of dealing with what he has seen is to pretend that it never happened. He is like Dorothy coming back to Kansas and convincing herself that Oz never existed. In many ways it's a perfectly understandable response. It is entirely possible that Paterson would have thought that the strange things he had seen were due to some sort of blackout and deciding it had all never happened was his way of dealing with it.

It's a pity that the final confrontation between Paterson and the Master leaves us thinking that Paterson was something of a coward. I don't believe he was a coward really – just a man out of his depth, one of many fishes out of water to appear over the years in Doctor Who.

I wrote to Julian Holloway a few years before Doctor Who made its triumphant return to television and he wrote back and said 'I suppose I must be partly to blame for putting the final nail in the good Doctor's coffin' so he was certainly aware of *Survival's* place in Doctor Who's history. Incidentally, the week Radio Times ran the listing for *Survival* part one, a young fan had a letter published in the RT letters pages which prompted BBC executive Peter Cregeen to make his famous comment saying that he hoped Doctor Who would 'continue to be as successful in the 90s as it has been for the for the last 26 years.' That young fan was me and that was my very first piece of published writing about Doctor Who! ▲





FOUND IN THE WILDERNESS

by Dean Hempstead

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...hold on. No it wasn't. It was amazing. At the time, what we now call 'the wilderness years' seemed very bleak indeed. The months and years after the broadcast of the final episode of *Survival*, we all seemed to be in some kind of weird limbo where time was standing still. Looking back, however, that was not the case. These times were just the beginning, all leading towards the eventual rebirth of the series that we have now. Before all of that, there were many hurdles to get over before every Doctor Who fan would get their dream – more Doctor Who than you could realistically shake a stick at.

Nestled within the early part of wilderness years sits *Dimensions in Time*. Broadcast as a charity special on the 26th and 27th November, just a few days after Doctor Who's Thirtieth anniversary, *Dimensions in Time* felt like the muscle spasm of a show that just would not die. Don't get me wrong, I love *Dimensions in Time*. I love the entire rich history of Doctor Who. I was saying recently that there are episodes that I regard as my least favourites – *Time Flight*, *Time and the Rani*, and *Dinosaurs on a Spaceship*. However, if someone had a button that deleted episodes, and they offered to delete them forever to join the rest of the missing instalments, I would very quickly ask them to

stay their hand. Could you delete it forever? A vital part of Doctor Who history?

Before *Dimensions in Time*, we had a couple of years of the Virgin New Adventures. New writers were on board, writers that would eventually work for the BBC and create the exceptional times that we have had since the party began back in 2005. A community of exceptionally talented writers were taking Doctor Who into new territory, writing books for a much broader and more adult audience. The fan base for these books very quickly grew.

Dimensions in Time was on a hiding to nothing from the very moment it was announced. Why? Because before this, when the only new Doctor Who being produced was in the written word, much excitement was gathering about a new project. A brand new story was to be produced to commemorate the Thirtieth Anniversary called *Lost in the Dark Dimension*. It was to feature the Third to Seventh Doctors, Ace and the Brigadier. After four years of reading, the Doctor was to make his return to the screen. The excitement was palpable, even without social media. It was not to be, however, and the project was cancelled in July 1993. *Lost in the Dark Dimension* was never to materialise. I remember the disappointment and how empty fandom felt around that time.

So not long after, *Dimensions in Time* was announced: a two part charity mini-adventure with an EastEnders crossover in 3D. On paper it sounded underwhelming, but in reality it deserved much more



praise than that. It served a purpose. It was broadcast over two nights, not just on Children In Need night, but also on Noel's House Party, which was at the height of its popularity at the time. I remember the thrill of seeing Jon Pertwee at the door in Crinkley Bottom, as I sat there with my pizza, beer and 3D glasses. Over those two nights, Doctor Who was reminding the audience that it was still around, not being produced, but it still had a huge following. Not only were the audience reminded, but they were asked to interact too by voting by telephone – how we made the choice between Mandy and Big Ron I have no idea (I voted for Big Ron).

There are some wonderful things to enjoy in *Dimensions in Time*. There's a scene with the Brigadier and the Sixth Doctor, which was a huge thing at the time as the Brig had never met him. A plethora of cameos from many of the much-loved characters from Doctor Who's wonderful history. Parts of it are tongue in cheek and very funny. It never takes itself too seriously. It is what it is and I love it. I still have my VHS copy, and nestled within it are the 3D glasses.

If you can believe that such a thing is possible, I think we took ourselves a bit too seriously and we watched things in a different way back then. I think it is because the BBC had cancelled Doctor Who. We were all like the jilted lovers of the BBC. They did not want us anymore. At times, from some of the things that I read on the internet, I wouldn't at all

blame them if they still didn't. But I think that is just a small minority that make the most noise these days. Now that Doctor Who is very much back in favour (and why wouldn't it be – it's brilliant), we seem to be able to take a charity special much less seriously. I mean, how brilliant is *Time Crash*? I mean yes, it is far superior to *Dimensions in Time* because it has a tighter script and doesn't try to cram in too many ideas. It is a thing of simplicity created by a genius.

In a world where Doctor Who seems to be in a very secure position, I think we are able to relax and enjoy these things much more. Would we have watched *Dimensions in Time* any differently now? I think we would. If you can just picture it for a moment – a two-part charity mini adventure Eastenders crossover in 3D, penned by Steven Moffat? It sounds exactly like the bonkers sort of thing that he would do. I would like to see that.

With the sad and exciting news that Steven Moffat is leaving Doctor Who, and Chris Chibnall is taking over, the BBC are talking about making new Doctor Who into 2018 and possibly beyond. This is excellent news. It's still incredibly popular. We couldn't have got here without *Dimensions in Time*, *Timelash* or other such unpopular stories. Because when we get all the noise from fandom about them, it is an excellent measure of how much the show itself is loved. ▲



IN SEVENTH HEAVEN

The TV Movie: The Seventh Doctor's Last Stand

by Stephen Hatcher

Do you remember the first time? Yes, September 2003, of course that was wonderful, but do you remember the excitement you felt the first time that you heard that the long wilderness years were at last coming to an end, and that after a wait of six years since our hero and his companion had wandered off to deal with that cold tea problem, Doctor Who was at last returning to our screens?

Of course, there were some concerns to temper the excitement. Would an American version of Doctor Who work? For that matter, just how American would it be? Would it be a complete reboot, ignoring all of the previous twenty-six series and thirty-three years? Perhaps that it exactly what it should be – or would that just make it a completely different show, Doctor Who in nothing but name? Would it even happen? There had been so many rumours, so many stalled attempts to revive the show and so much downright nonsense over recent years – with *The Dark Dimension* debacle still fresh in our memories – many of us read the news stories with just a little bit of scepticism.

We were reassured to discover that Philip Segal, the man behind this re-launch, was not only an established TV executive who had the clout to get this thing made, but also an Essex boy by birth, who had grown up watching and loving Hartnell, Troughton and Pertwee, so that was promising.

The casting of Paul McGann seemed to be just what was needed, a prominent British actor, with so many obviously 'Doctorish' qualities that he had been talked of as a potential Time Lord for years.

The icing on the cake was the news that the current Doctor, Sylvester McCoy, would

be travelling out to join the production in Vancouver to film his regeneration into his successor. Oh, how lovely! This tied the whole thing firmly into Doctor Who continuity, in the process confirming Sylvester as the longest-serving Doctor to date. All trepidations were set aside. If it was good enough for Sylv, then it was good enough for us. Of course, with hindsight, the casting of Sylvester, an actor with little or no profile in the USA beyond the fan community, was perhaps a sign that a little too much attention was being paid to Doctor Who continuity, rather than to ensuring that a strong coherent story was going to be told. Later it became clear that this was one of a number of fatal flaws in the TV movie. Sylvester himself has said that he should not have been in it, as American viewers, unfamiliar with the Seventh Doctor, struggled to work out who this man was whose presence was delaying the arrival of the promised leading actor and preventing the plot of the movie from really starting for all of twenty-two minutes.

All of that said, McCoy's Seventh Doctor was never so good as he was in those twenty-two minutes. Travelling unaccompanied – there is no explanation for the absence of Ace or any other companion – the Doctor we meet is relaxed and indeed chilled, reading H. G. Wells and listening to mellow jazz sounds on an ancient gramophone, as he transports the remains of the Master back from Skaro to Gallifrey (bizarre plot device).

The fact that we see him take great care to lock those Magisterial remains away in a little chest shows that he is aware that his greatest enemy still poses a threat, but surely the fact that he locks those Magisterial remains away *only* in a little chest demonstrates a rather unpardonable level of carelessness, or am I being uncharitable? Anyway...

What we see next is somewhat extraordinary. Forced to land in a back alley in San Francisco on the eve of the third Millennium, the Doctor steps out of the TARDIS, apparently without checking at all to see what is going on outside, for all the world as if he is about to pop down to the shops for the morning

paper – all this in the full knowledge that the Master is on the loose and must surely pose a significant threat to this, the Doctor's favourite planet. The subsequent hail-of-bullets-related events could surely not have come as that much of a surprise and the fallen Time Lord's pleas to young hoodlum Chang Lee to stop the escaping Master seem a little unlikely to achieve a great deal.

Unable to fathom this curiously casual behaviour, some fans have posited the theory that this most manipulative of Doctors knows exactly what he is doing and is in some way sacrificing his seventh persona, knowing that it will take his eighth to defeat the Master and save the Earth. This really does not bear any scrutiny. Clearly the Seventh Doctor would not balk at planning his own death, if that would help achieve his aims, but that just isn't what happens. By leaving the TARDIS and being shot, the Doctor effectively releases the Master upon the Earth and simultaneously leaves himself helpless to do anything about it. Whisked off to hospital, where he is operated upon and killed by the fabulous Doctor Grace, the Doctor has no idea what is going on. Far from welcoming his seventh regeneration, the Doctor pleads with Grace not to carry out the procedure that he knows will kill him. There then follows a lengthy period of post-regenerative confusion, during which, with the Doctor incapacitated, the Master, in the possessed form of zombie paramedic Bruce, can pretty much do what he wants. So, if this is all part of the Doctor's plan, then it really isn't much of a plan.

Of course, we know that everything turns out for the best as the Eighth Doctor, helped by Grace, defeats the Master, and – returning to

his Wells reading and jazz listening – sets off on a new series of adventures in book and audio form, before his rendezvous with the Sisterhood of Karn on the Night of the Doctor. On the other hand, we also know that, despite excellent viewing figures in the UK, the movie's US backers weren't impressed enough to invest in more Doctor Who, the coproduction deal between them and the BBC would cause no end of rights difficulties, and it would be nine more years before the Doctor would return to the television screens of the world.

Despite everything; despite the Seventh Doctor's bizarre behaviour; despite the fact that the movie's plot is all but absent during its first half; despite a strange hybrid script that is both continuity-bound and iconoclastic, displaying all too much concern with the surface paraphernalia of Doctor Who, but little understanding of what the show is actually about; despite 'half human on my mother's side'; I really rather love the TV Movie. It gave us a new and rather wonderful Doctor in Paul McGann; it broadened the show's vistas by showing that it could be more than a little England affair; it looks fabulous; once it gets going it moves at a cracking pace as if to make up for that lost first half; and perhaps more than anything it allows us to say goodbye to the Seventh Doctor, with Sylvester giving one of his most effective performances in the role.

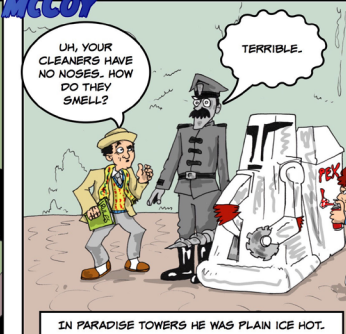
Forward-looking, filmic, fast-paced and exciting but at the same time with more than one eye over its shoulder to the heritage of the classic series, the TV Movie serves as a splendid bridge between the twentieth and twenty-first century versions of Doctor Who. We should treasure it more. ▲

HUMANIAN ERA

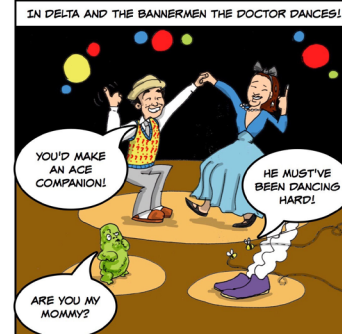
WHOM? ON SYLVESTER MCCOY



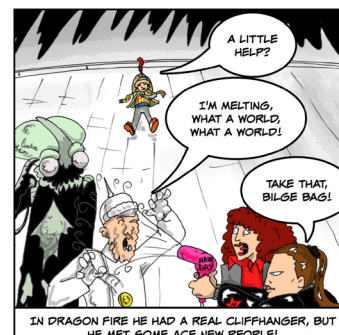
IN TIME AND THE RANI HE WAS A BIT BATTY...



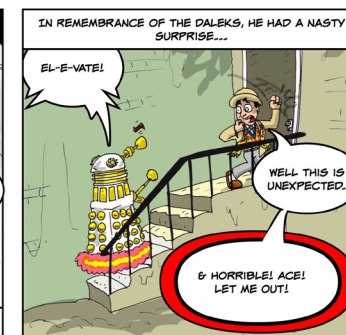
IN PARADISE TOWERS HE WAS PLAIN ICE HOT.



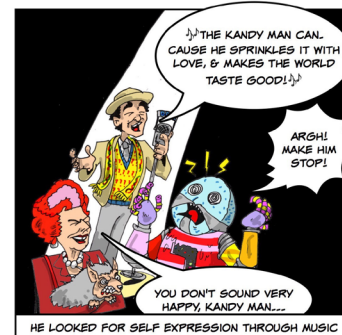
IN DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN THE DOCTOR DANCES!



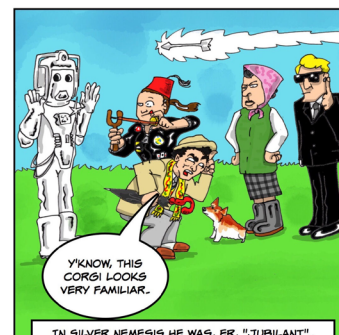
IN DRAGON FIRE HE HAD A REAL CLIFFHANGER, BUT HE MET SOME ACE NEW PEOPLE!



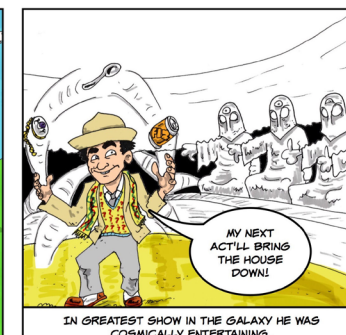
IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS, HE HAD A NASTY SURPRISE...



HE LOOKED FOR SELF EXPRESSION THROUGH MUSIC IN THE HAPPINESS PATROL...



IN SILVER NEMESIS HE WAS, ER, "JUBILANT".



IN GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY HE WAS COSMICALLY ENTERTAINING...



IN BATTLEFIELD HE WAS SIMPLY WIZARD!



IN GHOST LIGHT HE SHOWED GREAT CONTROL...



IN CURSE OF FENRIC HE WAS VERY MANIPULATIVE....



IN SURVIVAL HE WAS THE SPEECH MAKING HERO.

BY ANTHONY "WEIRD BEAN" MOORIN (C) COPYRIGHT 2016

THE MILLENNIUM WHOVIAN

by Joshua N Stevens

As a newer fan of *Doctor Who*, I am keen to watch everything from its past. These features see me exploring each 'classic'-era Doctor, and the show in general at the time.

The Seventh Doctor | 1987-89

This is the end of the main run of classic *Doctor Who*. After six changes in the man playing the universe's favourite Time Lord, the show would not continue into the 1990s. I explore everything that was actually going so well for it, and also how the cancellation was perhaps a good thing...

Story in Focus and the Evolution of the Show | *Survival* (1989) and the 80s Doctors

How ironic it is that just when *Doctor Who* was getting back on track – with a fantastic Season 26 – it was never allowed to continue into the 1990s. *Survival* is a superb adventure that proves that there was no need for the show's cancellation. It had not gone stale (John Nathan-Turner cannot be blamed for the show's demise, as he had wanted to leave earlier but was not allowed to).

The programme needed a reboot, and this had begun with its final season in the classic run; what a shame it was not allowed to carry on with this new direction, one that was so clearly working. But then again, it had to end at some point, and if it had continued for a Season 27, it might not be around in its modern form now. It could have been cancelled and not yet revived. "There will be no regrets, no tears, no anxieties" said the First Doctor. And that quote is what is stopping me from moaning about cancellation. And also the fact that it didn't affect me in the slightest, I didn't have to live through those 'wilderness years'...

Survival benefits from only having three episodes. Although the real reason for this

is that more could not have been afforded, I think some four-parters drag on a bit. Three parts is not too long and not too short (Season 22's two- and three-part stories consisting of 45 minute episodes being the best setup in the show's history in my opinion). *Survival* has a clear beginning, middle and end, which is one of many reasons it is so strong a serial.

The script of this story could be used in the modern series and still be incredibly successful; it's a plot with a great balance of Earth-based and alien planet scenes, a solid set of guest characters, the Master on top form, and an intriguing idea with the cheetah people. It's a shame their costumes were so silly: the big cats could have worn cloaks and been more dark and mysterious to solve this problem.

The way there was a running theme – survival of the fittest – through the story gave the viewers something to consider: perhaps there is a message there on today's society and how it is everyone for themselves. Must we always fight for our own survival, never looking out for other people? There is also the common interpretation about the struggles of the show, and the very fact that a story titled *Survival* was its last for

many years. Whether or not any of this is intentional, this adventure certainly manages to provoke thought in us, something that *Doctor Who* had been getting back to in the 1989 season.

We have almost come in a full circle, as viewers, by this point in the show's life. In the beginning, the Doctor – and everything about him and the Time Lords – was unknown to us. We gradually had things revealed to us; sometimes these things added positively to the mythos, some not so much. I feel that throughout the 1980s, we found out too much about the Doctor, and he lost the mysteriousness and 'wise old man' side to him – particularly the case with the Fifth Doctor. I do not, of course, have anything against him as an actor, but more how he was scripted. The casting of Matt Smith more recently has proved that a younger Doctor can still have that feeling of age; I just don't think Peter Davison's Doctor achieved that. After him, I think the casting of the Sixth Doctor was one of the best in the programme's history – Colin Baker had so much potential, so much he wanted to do with the character. Finally, in some ways Sylvester McCoy may not seem the most mystical of the Doctors, but, when time is taken to consider the character he is maybe the *most* mysterious of them; certainly by his final season. We were in store for

some magical adventures if the series had been continued...

The Doctor and Ace | Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred

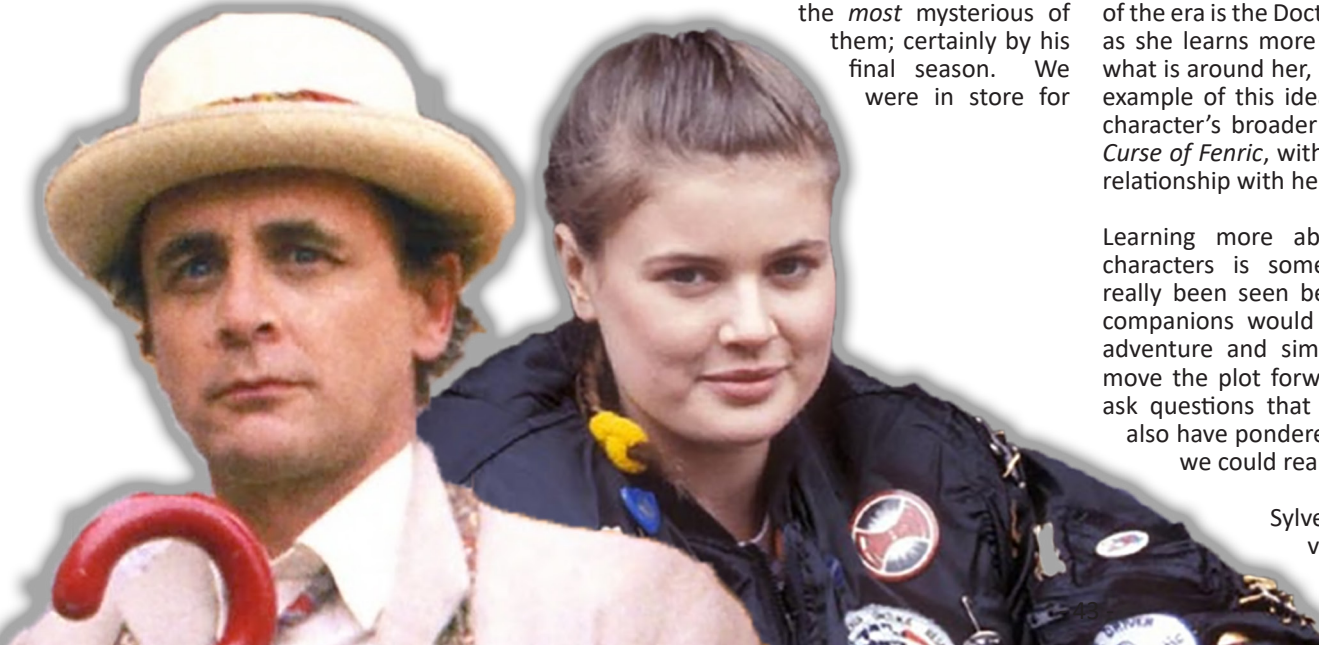
The Doctor perhaps lost some of the magic of his first four during the 1980s, but by Season 26 both he and the show in general are returning to the original idea of mystery.

After having learnt so much about who the Doctor is, and where he came from, with McCoy's Doctor we seen a very clear change in direction in how the character is presented.

The Doctor takes it upon himself to travel with Ace to teach her about just about everything, whether it is faraway civilisations or simply the history of her own planet. In an unusual way, this blatantly obvious approach to the student-teacher relationship that I find so hard to accept is in fact the least patronising towards the companion in the show's history. The Doctor explains things to Ace as a friend, rather than in an arrogant way, and the structure to their adventures allows, for the first time, some very interesting character development in the companion, and further knowledge of her history. The running theme of the era is the Doctor's teaching of Ace, and as she learns more about both herself and what is around her, so do we as viewers. An example of this idea of enlightenment of a character's broader life can be seen in *The Curse of Fenric*, with us learning about Ace's relationship with her mother.

Learning more about the real lives of characters is something that had never really been seen before in the show. The companions would just arrive at the next adventure and simply act as someone to move the plot forwards when needed, and ask questions that people at home would also have pondered, rather than someone we could really get to know.

Sylvester McCoy's Doctor is very interesting character. He does not have the



same arrogance as Colin Baker's Doctor, nor the elegant qualities of Pertwee's. He is dark and mysterious – just as the Doctor should be. But McCoy brings something unique to this; his whole manner is very alien and very different. A good example of his characteristics is demonstrated in *Survival*, when he sets bait for the cat. He is totally consumed by his own very clever agenda, not taking the time to explain the details to Ace. The two characters accept each other, with the companion fully understanding that the Doctor needs the space to be a genius, and him understanding that it is not Ace's fault that she doesn't know everything about the universe.

The Death of Doctor Who

It should all have ended here, in theory. No Twenty-Seventh season was commissioned for *Doctor Who*, it should have died out within a year or two, its fans moving onto something else and forgetting about the little sci-fi show that wasn't deemed good enough for a modern audience.

However, as we know, *Survival* did not mark the end of everything for the show. It was only just beginning, and the fans were not going to let go of it. In the years that followed, new *Doctor Who* continued to be produced in the form of books, comics, radio plays and fan fiction. It simply refused to die.

This devotion and love for the show from the fans through the 'wilderness years' just goes to show that, as a format, *Doctor Who* has to be one of the most incredible concepts for television of all time. What else could evoke such adoration from its viewers, be they die-hard fans or casual viewers? Even now, in the thankfully short gaps between series, we keep the excitement going. We make and share videos, artwork and writing – over the internet as well as in physical form as magazines and books – and are never without something new linked to our favourite programme.

Something that often surprises me is how casual viewers actually have a fairly decent

knowledge of *Doctor Who* at the moment. They may not have a clue about anything pre-2005, but a huge number of people will know which monster were in which story and with which Doctor, and what happened in the adventure. I have no idea whether this was the case in the original run for the show, but it is clear that all viewers can be drawn into some aspect of each story.

The death of the show will never happen. It may get cancelled again sometime in the future, but never will there be a definite end to this. Best described by stealing some lyrics from Sia, it's "unstoppable ... like a Porsche with no brakes". In other words, the BBC set this show in motion, and now it has run off on its own, and there's no way any high-powered executives can stop it!

The Era | Sylvester McCoy's Tenure

Doctor Who's popularity (both with the fans and the BBC itself) dipped a little in the mid-1980s, with the start of the McCoy era showing that the show was struggling to prove itself with very 80s style adventures (in my opinion). By its final season, things were getting back on track, and the show would have gone on to be extremely popular. I would even go as far as suggesting that the early 1990s would have seen another 'golden age' as in the 1970s with Tom Baker under Hinchcliffe.

Although it is a great shame the show was cancelled, might it have been a good thing? Everything has to end at some point and the cancellation has allowed the show to have a full reboot and the chance of a completely refreshed image. If *Doctor Who* had continued into the 1990s, it would eventually have run out of steam. It would not be around now as it had to have the forced reboot at some point to give it a new lease of life. The first attempt at this would be seen in the 1996 movie.▲..

Follow me as I explore the Doctor Who universe. I write about each story I watch at zygon63.wordpress.com. I'm also on Twitter @zygon63

AFTERWORD

by Lisa Bowerman

And as they walked into the bushes, with a speech specially written (after the filming had wrapped) by Andrew Cartmel...that really did seem the end, didn't it?

Well, unlike this publication – it wasn't. I think we all knew then that you can't keep a good man down, and by 1996 he seemed to be peeking his straw boater over the parapet again (if only for a short time.)

When I had the good fortune to appear in *Survival* back in 1989, Sylvester (together with Sophie) had really started finding his feet. Sylvester particularly had honed his Doctor to encompass dark and well as light and, to be honest, I don't think anyone was really expecting the series to be cancelled; although it was obvious, from the budgets and the scheduling, that there wasn't much love left for it within the higher echelons of the BBC. One of my enduring memories though, is the great atmosphere on set, due in large part to the benign presence of Sylvester and Sophie.

A small factoid you might, or might not, know was that not only was Andrew's marvellous final speech written after we'd finished shooting...but the bushes they walked into were in Dorset, rather than Horsenden Hill. The combination of over-running and BBC strikes meant they'd not had time to shoot the scene back in London. The good old, bad old days.

Looking back on the Sylvester years, it's easy to scoff at some of the more eccentric ideas, but what I'm sure is obvious now is the real commitment that Sylvester gave to the role, and continues to do. His twinkly, fun, thoughtful Doctor is still being enjoyed even now through the joys of Big Finish.

Let us not forget that Sylvester's also been a fantastic ambassador for the series. Taking on a role that is writ so large in the public's imagination – is not the easy task it might

seem to some. What is clear is that he's left a real legacy.

But – here we are today – with the 'new series' already being ten years old, and many more aspects of Sylvester's era being explored, not least of which through the productions of Big Finish.

Recently I've been having great fun being 'the other' companion to No 7, and working so close to his Doctor has been one of the joys of the job.

So – here we are. 'Somewhere there's danger, somewhere there's injustice, and somewhere else the tea's getting cold.' Come on you lot...We've (still) got work to do...and aren't we all thrilled to be able to say that? ▲

