

CELESTIAL TOYROOM



EDITORIAL

By Alan Stevens

"Normality is a paved road:
It's comfortable to walk,
but no flowers grow on it."

Every picture tells a story (or so it's said). Judged by artist Andy Lambert's amazing wrap-around cover for this edition of Celestial Toyroom, Vincent Van Gogh's involved meeting the Sixth Doctor and encountering at least one Dalek sometime after his adventure with the Eleventh Doctor and Amy Pond!

Great stuff!

It leads us straight into our first article, where Paul Driscoll tells about his recent monograph for The Black Archive on the celebrated *Doctor Who* escapade *Vincent and the Doctor*.

Next up we have John Kelly's candid feature detailing his contribution to the CGI augmenting of various classic era *Doctor Who* stories, before Fiona Moore and myself take on that perennial favourite from yesteryear, *Revelation of the Daleks*.

Thinking about a holiday?

How does a trip to the planet Skaro grab you?

Amazing place, but it might be advisable to peruse Finn Clark's exhaustive travelogue before setting off, as there are hidden dangers you will need to negotiate if you plan to return alive!

Some reading for your journey is supplied courtesy of Ian Scales as he voluntarily regresses back to childhood and explores the pages of TV Comic, plus various other *Doctor Who*-related spin-off strips from the 1960s and 70s.

Paul Driscoll's second contribution to this issue, plunging us into *The Dark Dimension*,

will also appeal, along with Jez Strickley's intriguing examination of series' continuity and why it may be so important to fandom.

This smorgasbord of delights continues with Paul Bensilum's humorous recall of his work as a convention organiser.

And as a closing treat, feline expert Fiona Moore investigates the magical quality of cats and their place in *Doctor Who*.

My thanks also go to Timothy Stephen Keable for his moody and evocative artwork which appears on our latest giveaway postcard. He tells me it was "inspired by the double spread in *The Dalek Outer Space Book* depicting *The Strata of Skaro*, specifically 'Icanos'."

And my appreciation to Tristan Lee Stopps for allowing access to his *Space Mountain* photographs, Paul Scoones in recognition of his encyclopaedic knowledge of *Doctor Who* comics and the assistance and constructive comments he provided, and finally to Phil Stevens for his valued mediation with the Golden Emperor of the Daleks.

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VINCENT AND THE BLACK ARCHIVE

By Paul Driscoll

What do Benedict Cumberbatch, John Hurt, Leonard Nimoy, and John Simm have in common? If I had included Kirk Douglas in the list, the answer would be obvious. They've all portrayed Vincent van Gogh onscreen. And that's just a few of them. Since Alain Resnais' influential 1948 short, over one hundred films, TV miniseries, and docudramas have been produced, making Van Gogh the preeminent subject of the artist biopic. His work crosses the divide between the academy and its art critics and pop culture and its consumers, bringing the tools and audiences of high art and mass media into each other's territory. The gallery can even find its way into *Doctor Who*, and *Doctor Who* into the gallery.



Since childhood, I too have been fascinated by Vincent's story. There were times in my youth when I believed he was my imaginary friend and guide. Like Vincent, I was brought up in a strictly Christian household; like Vincent, I felt like I belonged with those who didn't belong; and like Vincent, I was a dreamer who viewed the world quite differently from my peers. I would later learn my sense of kinship might have even more unexpected roots. At 18, I was told of an older brother who was forcibly taken from my parents because they were unmarried. Vincent was named for, and born exactly a year after, a child his parents lost. Raised as the oldest but not the oldest... yes, he was just like me.

I sought out Van Gogh's letters from the

same local library where I had discovered *Doctor Who*, to find the scatterings of everyday mundanity within their pages helped to make him more accessible. I went on multiple trips to London just to gaze upon his work at the National. I took out a subscription for The Greatest Artists magazine at my local newsagents (replacing the curtailed Terry Nation's Blake's 7: A Marvel Monthly) and I was one of a handful of students in my high school to sit an O level in Art History. As an adult, I completed a novel for Altrix Books, *After Vincent*, which imagines a future world where the artist is worshipped as the god of an intergalactic religion, and sees our heroes travel back in time to find the reality is quite different.



It will be obvious that, in a very real sense, my fandom radar can be tuned to the artist as clearly and quickly as it can to *Doctor Who*. So, when these two passions of mine came together in 2010 with *Vincent and the Doctor*, it didn't need the schmaltzy trademark touches of Richard Curtis to ensure this would be emotional viewing for me. My recollection of seeing the episode the first time, however, is one of slight disappointment. Not because it wasn't beautifully made, and expertly written and performed — it still stands out as one of the high points of the programme, somewhere in my top ten — but because it wasn't the

Van Gogh I knew. There are critical differences between Tony Curran's Vincent and the version of the artist who has been living in my head for nearly five decades.

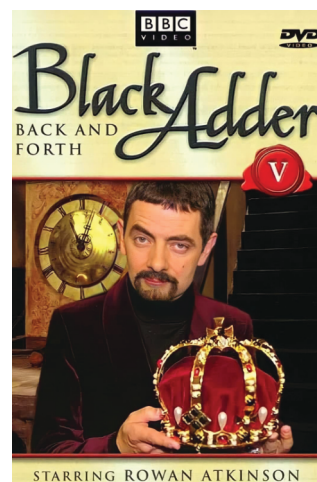
Curtis and Steven Moffat both admit their Vincent is based, to a large extent, on the myths surrounding the artist. But the episode has been given extra kudos and authority through being added to the Van Gogh Museum's interactive experience. While this reflects recent efforts to bridge the divide between high art and mass media, it also shows their presentation is considered not too far removed from a historian's accepted portrait of the artist. So, for me, undertaking a Black Archive study to analyse the ways the episode reflects both the myths and reality of the man, was fair game.

I reviewed *Vincent and the Doctor* as objectively as I would any Vincent biopic, maintaining a critical distance and putting aside any of the emotions Curtis intended to arouse in me. Forensically, I made connections between the script and the artist's correspondence, between the facts as presented and those we can be reasonably sure about — a task made more complicated by the liberal way in which Vincent himself unashamedly fictionalised his life story through his letters.

The archive is divided into four sections — the voice of the writers (principally Curtis but also Moffat); the voice of the artist (Van Gogh, the man, and the myth); the voice of the monster (both the Krafayis and the symbolic monster of mental illness); and the voice of the paintings. I found these differing voices sometimes work harmoniously, and at other times undermine each other, at both script level and the reception and interpretation of the story. Even within one of these, there is occasional disharmony, such as the differing understandings of the role of the companion — with elements of Moffat's backstory for Amy Pond making her unsuitable for playing the more traditional companion role that Curtis had obviously envisaged. The secrets and lies Moffat's

Eleventh Doctor is keeping also make him a problematic hero for a Curtis' penned work.

My first chapter includes discussion of various Curtis' scripts, from *Bernard and the Genie* (1991) to *Yesterday* (2019). I was determined to avoid any romcom debates about Curtisland by looking at his wider body of work, especially as the ability to circumvent time is a recurring feature which transcends genre (*Bernard and the Genie*, *Blackadder: Back and Forth* [1999], *About Time* [2013], *Yesterday*). By examining some of Curtis's go-to techniques and themes I was able to move beyond the limited if worthy, conclusion that the episode is solely about Vincent's struggles with depression. Curtis has always been interested in fame and its antithesis — a lack of recognition. Given his own experiences of being Rowan Atkinson's forgettable straight man, it's no surprise he would want to find a way to fix the injustice of Vincent not knowing how loved and valued he would become.



For the chapter on the voice of the artist, I familiarised myself with over twenty Van Gogh biopics and categorised them according to how they respond to the ongoing myth. Some are iconoclastic, suspicious of the motivations behind all past retellings (*At Eternity's Gate* [2018]) while others are sycophantic and reinforce the romance and tragedy, going to town with the notion of the tortured genius (*Lust for Life*

[1956]). Then there are those which sit somewhere between those two stalls, happy to be part of the myth, but seeking to offer correctives and ask new questions (*Loving Vincent* [2017]). While it comes close to doing this, in the end, *Vincent and the Doctor* remains conservatively wedded to the myth. Indeed, it repeats past errors of completely ignoring the artist's social background, of isolating him from the artistic community that he was very much still a part of, even during his stays in various hospitals and asylums. The presentation of Van Gogh as a loner might be an expedient one to limit the cast list and simplify the story, but it's the biggest error of the piece.

We can allow for creative licence when it comes to shifting times and places in Vincent's life (conflating events which took place in Arles with those in Auvers for instance), but cutting off Vincent from the art community he was so steeped in, leaves a distorted picture. His recreated studio, aside from a few newspaper articles, is devoid of any work other than his own, yet Vincent displayed a huge collection of Japanese prints and paintings by his favourite artists there. This is more than just a problem of set dressing because it encourages the mistaken belief that Vincent was a special case. A god among men. Or in the words of Curtis' spokesperson for the myth, Doctor John Black: 'the world's greatest artist, but also one of the greatest men who ever lived.'



Given Curtis's work with *Comic Relief* and other charitable ventures, here he demonstrates a surprising disinterest in issues of poverty and discrimination, both in the selection and placement of paintings used during the episode and with his failure to offer any meaningful reasons for Vincent's lack of popularity. Vincent loved to surround himself with fellow eccentrics, so again it was strange Curtis chose not to marry this up with his usual trope of the mad, over-the-top, wacky friend. Émile Bernard doesn't even get a mention. Perhaps he thought there was enough madness in Vincent. Certainly, the Doctor never gets to play this role in the episode: rather, he is the grumpy gooseberry, the traditionalist who just doesn't get Vincent's work. He's also completely out of his depth when trying to offer solace to the artist, who finds instead, a kindred spirit in Amy Pond.



The chapter on the monster looks at the hard-to-pin-down Krafayis. Various revisions of the script have made it a polyvalent metaphor, sometimes an analogy of Vincent himself, sometimes of depression, and sometimes of Vincent's human abusers. The differing designs for it by Peter McKinstry also show the shifting sands upon which this creature was based. The Krafayis has been considered an unnecessary addition, included only to make the episode feel more like *Doctor Who*. In fact, the monster is as important, if silent, a voice as Vincent's. This section also reads the episode in the context of the BBC's approach to issues of depression, suicide, drug and alcohol

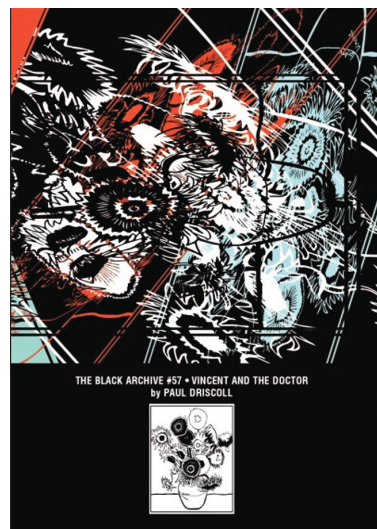
dependency, and self-harm. Curtis got away with not formally consulting mental health experts and practitioners by relying on his own personal experiences of his late sister Belinda and focussing less on the sufferer and more on how we can support them.

In the concluding chapter, I examine the role of the paintings in the episode, starting with a historical overview of how *Doctor Who* has portrayed art and artists over the years. Steven Moffat, more than any other writer and producer, has often used pictures to further a plot, for example, the *Gallifrey Falls No More* painting from *The Day of the Doctor*. Indeed, the programme has always been as much a work of art as a work of fiction, and any retrospective of the Moffat era would do well to remember this. I spent an inordinate amount of time identifying every Van Gogh painting and drawing featured in the episode. A task made harder by the fact some printed images were reversed, replicated, or cropped.

My final thoughts on this episode are that *Vincent and the Doctor*, far from being a one-off celebrity historical, is a story which shaped much of what was to come during Steven Moffat's tenure. And I'm not just talking about the painting in *The Pandorica Opens*. Moffat specifically hired Curtis to inject some emotionalism into the series

following Russell T Davies' departure, fearing that as a "dour Scot" he might not be up to the job. In truth, the Moffat years are full of emotional punch, as elements from *Vincent and the Doctor* (including some classic Richard Curtis techniques) are carried over into them. Curtis may have only scripted the one story for *Doctor Who*, but his distinctive voice continued to be heard.

The Black Archive #57: *Vincent and the Doctor* was released on 1 February 2022 and is available for order from <https://obversebooks.co.uk>



RETRO-EFFECTS

By John Kelly

I'd begun working for the *Doctor Who* DVD range in 2001, chiefly on camera duty, but I also carried out editing tasks for other producers. My brief was quite flexible: line producers were open to proposals from anyone they considered capable of delivering a decent product. Taking advantage of these opportunities, I began to create my own extras for the range, starting somewhat modestly with a number of short, cheap documentaries, and gradually building up to bigger fare.



In 2005, it was decided to substitute *Revelation of the Daleks* for the release of the Colin Baker adventure *Attack of the*

Cybermen, and my primary line producer, Steve Roberts, well aware that *Revelation* was one of my favourite serials, knew I'd kill them all if I wasn't involved in its production! For the safety and continuation of the Restoration Team, I was assigned as the main producer for most of the Value Added Material (VAM). The team wanted this to be a bells-and-whistles release, so we looked at what could be realistically achieved. Mark Ayres was working on a 5.1 audio mix, and I felt the production would benefit if the video effects were spruced up at the same time. This seemed an exciting prospect as it would give the viewer the option of watching a version of the story which married up both elements.

Previously, on *The Five Doctors* and *Earthshock*, the BBC had handled such demands in-house. However, I'd always been rather adept at Adobe After Effects, and I fancied a crack at it myself. Steve agreed, so on I went. But just because one has the option of slathering new effects on any piece of vintage telly (or film), doesn't mean one should! For instance, in my opinion, the new effects imposed on the original *Star Wars* movies are, by and large, both inappropriate and not an improvement. In fact, the falseness of some of the stuff really draws me out of the films. So, in my head, I worked out my entry criteria:



1. any new effects would be designed in sympathy with the context and feel of the original programme.
2. there should be a clearly reasoned benefit for any new effects.

I should immediately hold my hands up and admit such judgements are subjective, and I probably didn't always get it right in practice!

The other thing I'd like to underline is that any decision to put upgraded effects onto these old shows was in no way intended to denigrate the work of people like Mitch Mitchell or Dave Chapman, both of whom are legends in my book. Such sequences were always meant simply as an alternative — utilising modern, improved technology to realise the intention behind the original effects.



One of our principal tasks in updating these programmes is the need to remove or overlay what had been created at the time. For *Revelation*, I did have something of a head start. During production on *The Two Doctors* DVD, I'd been hassling Steve to obtain for me the 'clean' Colin Baker title sequences. We discovered they were missing from the archives, although I presume they have since been returned. Steve did, however, manage to locate a one-inch tape containing the set I wanted and, delightfully, a large amount of clean studio material from *Revelation*. They were not marked as such, but we suspect the tape had been dubbed off the master and was meant to go to Dave Chapman for additional video effects. Although not quite comprehensive, it was a great advantage to acquire this to work from.

The vast majority of the sequences I tackled dealt with beam effects. For these, I looked to incorporate interactive lighting as much as possible, because I've always believed it

lends an air of realism. I also took great pains to anchor the beams solidly to the barrel of the guns which were firing them.

When it came to the D.J.'s "rock 'n roll" sonic cannon, I was only able to augment its existing effect — in retrospect, I think I would probably go for something substantially different if re-doing it today. Thankfully, I was able to enhance other visual effects, adding a slightly more subtle grading to the establishing shot of Kara's factory, and an x-ray-type effect to Orcini's hand as he detonates the big bomb.

By far my greatest task was the sequence where Grigory and Natasha are exterminated in the Incubation Room. The original intention was that a newly formed Dalek should hover some distance off the ground, shoot down the two intruders, and then, for some reason, explode. (The justification for this currently escapes me, although I'm sure there's a great explanation in the script!) To achieve this, the original production used a foot-high Sevans' Dalek model superimposed over a background shot of the room taken in studio. However, the angle and proportions were rather eccentric, and when combined with the bright, strobe lighting, and accompanied by a massive Dalek scream from Roy Skelton, it made the whole sequence feel too much like a David Lynchian nightmare.

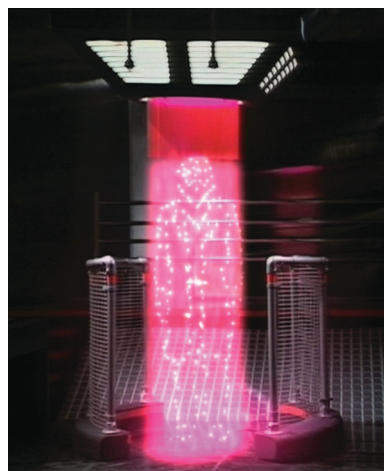
We had the clean background shots to work from on the rushes tape, so I reached out to Daniel O'Keeffe, a friend, and talented prop builder, and asked him to make me a Dalek model for a reshoot. He obliged with impressive speed, using another Sevans' model painted up in the appropriate colours. I set up a greenscreen and placed the model on a small rostrum lit softly with red gels, my camera being positioned at a low angle, looking up at the Dalek. I recorded various takes of it 'hovering' into position, and others of pyrotechnics going off. These shots were then composited onto the original background, to which I added lasers and a shimmering glowing effect for the levitating Dalek. The final explosion is actually a blend

of various different takes in order to give the denouement a bigger impact.

Soon after, I pitched to provide upgraded effects for *Arc of Infinity*. Now, it isn't unreasonable to suggest this tale is perhaps not the pinnacle of 1980s *Who*. However, as a viewer, those candy-cane laser beams had always bugged me, and I thought there was enough laser action to make it a worthwhile challenge.

I also ended up doing a bit of extra filming for the energy field that penetrates the Tardis in Part One. This became a spinning ball of aluminium foil, overexposed and treated with various effects to jazz it up.

Another effect I was quite pleased with was the execution and subsequent re-incorporation of the Doctor. Specifically, I did a little nod to the title sequence on the latter, by having a number of small white points come together to form a silhouette of Peter Davison, just before he pops back into existence.



The new series of *Doctor Who* was airing at this point, and I noticed most of the laser effects had subtle textures rather than being a simple, straight beam of light, so I incorporated something similar into the Gallifreyan stazers, and the Ergon's gun.

Shortly after *Arc*, I was commissioned to

produce revised effects for *Destiny of the Daleks*. In terms of its production, I had always thought the serial was underrated; it's very well directed by Ken Grieve, and the location filming is terrific. Nonetheless, I felt it could benefit from some scrubbing up of the effects.

Consequently, I added textured laser beams to the Movellan blasters and augmented the Dalek exterminations. I further devised an exhaust trail for the Movellan spaceship which, looking back, I am not sure works so well.



It was on this release that I made a regrettable mistake when I added effects to what I believed were shots being fired out of the Movellan spaceship door. Unfortunately, I'd misread the concept of the whole scene — the surface explosions were not caused by the Movellans, but were the result of the Daleks' underground excavation which involved "high impacted phason drills", as explained by the Doctor a few scenes later! I've really no idea how I managed to get so confused, and it's horribly embarrassing. So, let me take this opportunity to humbly apologise to the entirety of fandom. Steve Roberts did manage to pull the errors from the United States release, and they're

further absent from the 2022 Blu-ray, so at least there is some silver lining.

Up next, was *The Invasion of Time*. Again, there were lots of nice lasers to update, and clean film sequences to work with. I also figured out some cool materialisation effects (admittedly influenced by *Star Trek*) enhanced starship thrusters and space backgrounds, planets, and the like. They all turned out pretty well.

My most notable change for this adventure was to the main protagonists, the Vardans. These aliens, when not fully materialised, were originally represented on screen by what appeared to be little bits of aluminum foil suspended in mid-air: possibly not the greatest effect in the history of the show. I wanted to do something different, yet not stray a million miles from the original concept, so my starting point would be the essential textured form.

I wrapped myself from head to foot in aluminum foil to create this base material, first setting up a camera and greenscreen. I lined the camera up to match the angles on the programme, then recorded myself acting to the relevant Vardan sequences as they played alongside on a nearby monitor. There were occasions when I had to portray multiple Vardans for a single shot.

This new footage was taken into After Effects and treated with several processes — luma keys, glows, all sorts — adding quite a few layers. I'd noticed a crackly, electricity-kind-of sound effect that accompanied the Vardans, so for the final element, I introduced some freshly rendered, sparking, dancing electricity, which I superimposed over the remodelled Vardan bodies.



The result, as seen on the DVD, represents what is probably my best work for the range. The reimagined Vardans were well received, and I think made a legitimate and positive impact on the story.

The Invisible Enemy followed soon after. This one featured the highest proportion of additional filming undertaken for any of these updated effects projects, largely involving the shuttle model that was kindly loaned to us by Mat Irvine. We also had several 35mm slides from the original film sections, and these we scanned at high resolution, using them to composite alternative versions of scenes such as the opening asteroid field sequence and those involving the medical base.



One of our intended aims was to present the landscape of Titan (the largest moon of Saturn and primary setting for this adventure) with more accuracy. Of course, in 1977, Titan's features had been largely guesswork, but when NASA and the European Space Agency landed the Huygens atmospheric entry probe on its surface, it gave us real and amazing views of an alien world on which to base our effects. We composited the newly filmed shuttle model against background plates sourced from the 35mm slides, and public NASA imagery, with

CGI enhancement added to create a thick, yellow atmosphere. Some of these shots were successful — the initial approach of the shuttle to Titan and the subsequent low angle as it fires its landing jets look great. However, getting realistic motion into the composites was not always easy, or feasible.

For example, we were unable to do anything about the view out of Supervisor Lowe's window because of the various actors passing in front of it. We tried to work around this, but even getting a locked matt onto the window frame proved impossible. The picture was just too muddy and low-resolution to work with. Unfortunately, this lessened the overall impact of our efforts.

My ultimate feeling about our work on *The Invisible Enemy* is that we had the best of intentions and good ideas, but some of the elements stretched us past our capacity to achieve them.

The *Battlefield Special Edition* was my last effects project. I was commissioned directly for it by the Special Edition (SE) Line Producer, Mark Ayres. The work involved the usual laser beams and an augmented 'sonic' blast for the knights' grenades. My stand-out memory is how I dealt with the lightning effects. One night, some years previously, I'd witnessed a spectacular lightning storm over Poole, and had set up my video camera in the back garden to record it. I used this footage, slowed down a bit, to enhance relevant points in *Battlefield*. I think these sequences turned out really well.

I also created new space shots of the knights falling to Earth and I vividly recall adding bloody bullet hits as the Brigadier shoots the Destroyer. I made the blood dark blue, and



it's an underlit scene anyway — but I'm still rather surprised I got away with the arterial spray which shoots from the Destroyer's neck just before everything explodes!

As I said, it was the final one I did — hard work, but very fulfilling, and, overall, I think my contributions still stand up today. I'm sometimes asked if there is a particular serial

I'd like to take a crack at. Although *Resurrection of the Daleks* is an obvious candidate, *Warriors of the Deep* would also be of interest. It's got loads of scope for improved effects, aggressive grading, and fine-tuning here and there. In particular, we could make those scenes with the Myrka nigh-on pitch black, and do something about that floppy airlock door!

COOL THINGS REVELATION OF THE DALEKS

By Alan Stevens and Fiona Moore

38 Cool Things about
Revelation of the Daleks
(and 12 Stupid Ones)

(But we're not telling you which is which)
(We're expecting you to work that out for yourselves)

1. Arguably, the Doctor and Peri are completely redundant to this story, saying and doing nothing which couldn't be cut from the narrative, or given to somebody else.



2. Peri's shoes might not be the sort of high-heeled and platformed contraptions Liz Shaw and Jo Grant sported back in the day, but they definitely aren't practical.

3. In his very second line, the Doctor fat-shames Peri, then goes on to berate her for being ignorant about someone who was born centuries after her time.

4. Both do mention food quite a lot, suggesting the vegetarianism they adopted after *The Two Doctors* isn't working out for either of them.

5. Davros has created a mutant that can live underwater in subzero weather, and yet it explodes upon eating a nut-roast roll.

6. The mutant in the pond is missing a finger, so it's clearly not the same mutant as the one which we then see following the Doctor and Peri.



7. There are a lot of continuity references to Peri's past as a botany student here, with her knowing Latin and collecting flowers to take back to her university.

8. Also there's an allusion to *Timelash* (the Doctor flinching when Peri picks the flower, they having previously encountered one that squirted acid).

9. Note the black felt cats sewn onto the inside of Colin Baker's coat; a new silhouette was added following the completion of each Sixth Doctor adventure. The practice was dropped between seasons, neatly avoiding the question of how many there would have been for *The Trial of a Time Lord*.



10. The walls, doors, and lighting on Necros give it the feel of a 1980s hotel, which is actually quite appropriate.

11. There's good use made of funereal

imagery in the serial, with pyramids, catacombs, and the broken grave markers in Davros' lair.

12. The monuments are appropriately ecumenical, including Hindu, Egyptian, Assyrian and Orthodox elements, as well as the Western Christian ones the intended audience would be most familiar with.

13. The religious imagery, it should be noted, is all in the abandoned lower levels of Necros, while the modern funeral home is blandly and sleekly atheistic.

14. Beck's Syndrome actually exists and refers to ischaemia or infarction of the anterior spinal artery. It is associated with high mortality and loss of motor control/coordination.

15. "I want to know why the courts were so unwilling to let me have his body back." Natasha will later discover the people in power, including the judiciary, have an interest in Necros' clientele remaining exactly where they are — as otherwise their predecessors might return and take their jobs.

16. Producer John Nathan-Turner objected to the scene in *City of Death* where Eleanor Bron and John Cleese play art critics, on the grounds the audience would be taken

out of the story. However, he didn't seem to think they'd be taken out of *Revelation of the Daleks* by Eleanor Bron's appearance as Kara.

17. As it is, a contemporary audience had almost certainly been taken out of the adventure already by the arrival of popular socialist stand-up comedian Alexei Sayle.

18. Everybody loves the line "I'm a past master of the double-entry", but misses that Kara follows it up with "then you must

make it triple!"

19. Davros' head and its life-support system may well have been inspired by the 1963 sci-fi movie *They Saved Hitler's Brain*.



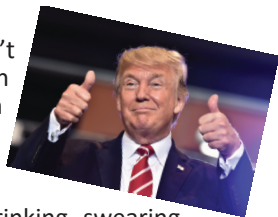
20. *Diamonds Are Forever* also seems to have been an influence, with Takis and Lilt referencing assassin duo Mr Wint and Mr Kidd, and Tranquil Repose bearing more than a passing resemblance to the Slumber Inc. funeral home.

21. This is Alec Linstead's third role in *Doctor Who*: as well as Stengos, he also played Jellicoe in *Robot* and Sergeant Osgood in *The Dæmons*.

22. It's actually sort of refreshing to discover that although Orcini is a disabled character he's neither bitter and twisted nor otherwise villainous.

23. Orsini is the name of an Italian noble family which flourished in the Renaissance and contributed three popes, thirty-four cardinals, and a large number of other political and religious figures. That's one letter off "Orcini".

24. "America doesn't have the monopoly on bad taste", says the Sixth Doctor, which is where we will leave it.



25. "There will be no drinking, swearing, or smoking of herbal mixture in the presence of the deceased. Are you picking your nose? I should hope not. All necessary conversations will be conducted in a whisper." The fact Jobel actually has to tell his staff all of this suggests the behaviour at this funeral home is generally beyond appalling.

26. The Doctor finds a statue of himself in the Garden of Fond Memories, meaning he must have died on Necros sometime in the past. However, Peri thinks he's going to die



now, and asks what's going to happen to her since she can't pilot the Tardis. Wouldn't it make more sense if Peri told the Doctor to take her back to Earth at once?

27. The whole Eleventh Doctor plot about his death on Trenzalore being an established historical fact, is clearly taken from this tale.

28. The scene of the Doctor being crushed to death under his own memorial stone could have concluded *Revelation of the Daleks*, and would have made an intriguingly paradoxical end to the season — or, if the show had failed to return, to the programme entirely.

29. This serial is full of metatextual references to the surveillance society, with characters seemingly aware of the cameras filming them.

30. Director Graeme Harper, at one point, rolls the video image through a vertical sequence of identical corridors with different people walking along them. Metatextually, this draws the viewer into the story and emphasises the artifice of television production, but we do wonder how many contemporary viewers simply assumed the vertical hold on their television sets had gone.

31. Since we then cut to the "D.J." viewing the final image from this sequence, it's cleverly ambiguous whether the viewer themselves or the D.J. is the observer.

32. There's of course also a metatextual element in the D.J. watching the action on his television cameras and commenting on it directly to the viewer.

33. On release from his cryogenic prison in *Resurrection of the Daleks*, Davros described the experience as "Ninety years of mind-numbing boredom." Inversely, the entombed residence of Tranquil Repose have their "resting consciousness...



constantly updated concerning social, cultural and technological developments."

34. Upon seeing a recording of the D.J., Peri becomes obsessed with meeting him, purely because he's "a little like the D.J.s on Earth."

35. Just why she thinks he's "from the States" is more of a mystery since his accent is notably (and deliberately) unconvincing.

36. The D.J. has four bottles of Coca-Cola in his room. Either Coca-Cola is still being made whenever this story is set, or the contents of those bottles are absolutely vile.

37. The Doctor tells Peri to go with Jobel, saying she'll be a good deal safer with him than with the Great Healer. This is true, but it's rather like telling someone they'll be safer with Jimmy Savile than with Josef Mengele.

38. "You mean we've been set up?" "You're the one with the infallible instincts, you tell me." Orcini and Bostock also get metatextual, having read their own character descriptions.

39. Tasambeker, when she turns on Jobel, joins in with the fat-shaming. Is there an irony in finding a lack of body-positive sentiments on Necros?

40. Notice how the scene where Tasambeker finally declares her passion for Jobel and is rejected, comes close on the scene where the D.J. breaks out



of passive-voyeur mode and communicates with the Doctor, making himself a target for the Daleks. Passive obsession becomes fatal when actively voiced.

41. The D.J.'s "ultrasonic beam of rock'n'roll" sounds like 1980s electronica. Perhaps a riposte to contemporary critics who argued electronic music wasn't 'proper' rock?

42. Meanwhile, since the D.J. has set his speakers to broadcast, the Doctor is now listening to Peri's audio adventures.



43. The reason why the Dalek in the incubation room explodes must be down to the buttons Grigory presses while trying to shut the machinery down.

44. Is being bored out of his head the motivation for Davros in this story? Having created his Dalek army, he's downsized to meddling in the office politics at Tranquil Repose and thinking up elaborate and expensive ways to mess with the Doctor's mind.

45. Davros loses a hand in this serial, and, when he returns for the twenty-first century series, has a mechanical one to replace it.

46. Orcini uses bullets fitted with "Bastic heads" to combat a Dalek. "Bastic bullets" will appear again in *The Parting of the Ways*.

47. This is a tale with no less than three named female characters, and two of them do meet and talk about something other than the male characters. Admittedly it's funeral arrangements, but the Bechdel Test is indeed passed.

48. "That plot for Perpetual Instatement would make good growing land." So, Takis' plan is still to feed people on corpses, just less directly.



49. Although it was a last-minute decision, it is indeed a much more effective ending to freeze-frame before the Doctor says "Blackpool."

50. And it also makes it very clear the main person who's been viewing the adventure up to this point is neither the D.J. nor Davros, but you.

three Dalek annual-like hardbacks produced in the 1960s, then another four in the 1970s. Add in *The Dalek Pocketbook and Space-Travellers Guide* (1965) and we've got a lot of information about Skaro. We know its maps, dictionaries, prehistory, and geological strata.



Skaro has been explored like a lurid sci-fi version of Tolkien's Middle Earth. And what a wild and exotic place it has turned out to be.

So, what do we know of the Dalek homeworld?

According to the *Doctor Who and the Dalek Omnibus* (1976), it is located in the Seventh Galaxy. "It lies far beyond the constellation Andromeda and is estimated to contain over one hundred thousand million stars... Optical observations have identified some of the celestial bodies near Skaro, but visual research is much hampered by the light distortions caused by the constantly shifting clouds of burning gas... Outside of Skaro, there are few planets that could support any form of highly developed life. Satellite fly-bys have detected movement in the swampy oceans of the twin-ringed planet Phebeyus. Photographs taken by the satellite from a range of more than a thousand miles show shadowy images of things wallowing slowly through the ammonia seas. If indeed these are creatures they must be of fantastic size and bulk."

We are told during the Daleks' first television serial, Skaro is the twelfth planet in the solar system, while both *The Dalek Book* (1964) and *The Dalek World* (1965) state it possesses two suns.

It also has three moons/satellites:

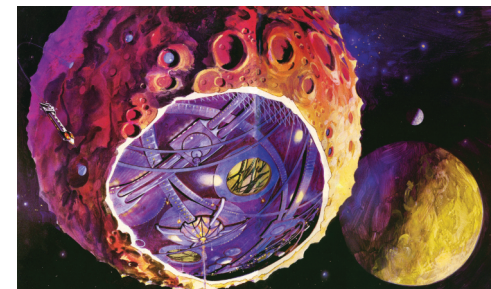


FLIDOR — is described in *The Dalek Book* as "one of the satellite moons of Skaro. A dead world but rich in a blue veined gold metal." Flidor gold is identified as one of the elements used in the construction of the

Dalek Emperor's outer casing.

FALKUS — The *Doctor Who and the Dalek Omnibus* states it was considered to be a large, uninhabited, "piece of space debris" until questions were raised because its "estimated spaceweight did not conform to its surface area." Subsequent exploration by unpiloted "research probes" and "a robot drilling rig" hit a solid metal barrier, prompting further investigations by a "United Worlds research unit". They came to the startling conclusion Falkus was "not a natural celestial body, but is of Dalek manufacture."

Its purpose and design was conceived by Davros as an impregnable repository for Dalek genetic material, ensuring the race's survival, even if all life on Skaro was destroyed. His vision wasn't realised until generations later when the city inside the orb was completed. It is described as "a 'living' machine" with the capability to defend itself from attack, and is rumoured to have, along with the "seeds of [Dalek] life", a chamber housing Davros' brain, to be resurrected during some future "time of great peril". Falkus is visited once every hundred years by the Supreme Dalek, who alone knows the true nature of the satellite.



OMEGA MYSTERIUM — We are told in the aforementioned *omnibus* it is protected by an energy barrier strong enough to resist all attempts at landings. "In the opinion of some this force field is not of natural origins. If this is so, it would suggest the planet holds intelligent life."

Skaro's nearest neighbour used to be Alvega, which contained sentient plant life, "called

COME VISIT SKARO:

THE GREATEST PLANET IN THE UNIVERSE.

By Finn Clark

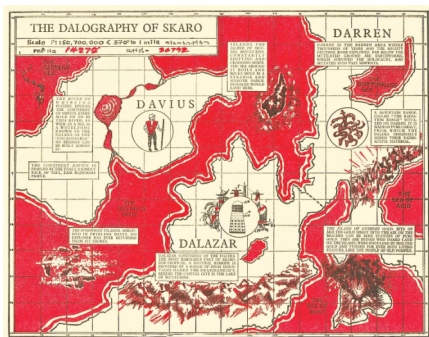
We've travelled to hundreds of worlds with *Doctor Who*, and heard about many offscreen ones, but they have all tended to have two things in common — quarries and corridors. We're not in George Lucas territory. Some of them, however, are memorable; often the ones created by Terry

Nation. And Skaro is so extraordinary it's inspired me to write this article about it.

What's more, it's a planet which has been developed a lot, both in televised stories and spin-offs such as the TV Century 21 *The Daleks* comic strip (1965—1967). There were

the Amerylls". However, this was also the first world the Daleks visited after developing space flight (See *The Daleks* comic strip), and now, unfortunately, it no longer exists.

A map (or "dalography") of Skaro was published in *The Dalek Book*, *The Dalek Pocketbook and Space Travellers' Guide*, and the 1979 *Dalek Annual*. It shows three continents (Davius, the sub-tropical Dalazar, and the devastated Darren); two mountain ranges (The Drammankins, and The Radiation Range of pure cobalt); four seas (Bottomless, Acid, Serpent, and Rust); The Ocean of Ooze, and some bizarre geographical features. There's an Island of Moving Mountains, and a River of Whirling Waters termed the "uncrossable". The Forbidden Islands in The Ocean of Ooze "are always covered by a thick mist", but scanners indicate the presence of life — although what form this takes remains a mystery, since "no explorer has ever returned from their shores." Then there's the uncharted Sonic Desert, composed of "tiny grains of diamonds and rubies", and "protected by a blanket of sound whose origin is unknown. The sound is deadly to all outsiders" while "the few creatures to emerge from the Sonic Desert — small, poisonous horned lizards, have died in agony at the lack of sound."



New surface features are illustrated in a diagram, *The Strata of Skaro*, that appears in *The Dalek Outer Space Book* (1966). The Ocean of Death (Skaro's deepest sea); The Lake of Snakes (presumably not the Serpent Sea but an additional reptile-infested body of water); Canyons of Terror (with time-

lapsed sonic reflections); The Fissure (a weakness in the structure of Skaro caused by the ice core's expansion); The Islands of Mists (probably another name for The Forbidden Islands); The Bore Hole; The Waters of Fire (which are bright red); and The Desert of Despair. Many space travellers have landed in the latter's craters. "It has taken them months to find their way out, because navigation instruments are useless due to the strange magnetism."

The 1976 *Dalek Annual* gives us even more topographical information. "The island of Sezam is situated in a remote corner of Skaro's largest ocean, The Sea of Death." Sezam is one huge labyrinth, and "its unique formation is due to the effects of gigantic winds and waves on the molten lava."

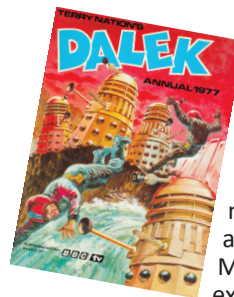
In the 1977 edition, an article, *The Dark Side of Skaro*, provides an intriguing list:

THE SWAMP LANDS — "Neither land nor sea. It appears to be growing larger. There is some evidence that the Swamp Lands is some vast living organism that engulfs and feeds upon anything that comes near its surface."

THE LAND OF THE MUTANTS — "A Dalek neutron weapon-testing area. Prisoners who were used in early tests have been exposed to massive radiation. The resulting generations have become ghastly mutations."

THE OCEAN OF DEATH — "The acid content of this sea is so high that it would destroy human tissue in seconds. The terrible sea monsters that inhabit these deeps are protected by hides so thick and dense that they're invulnerable to even the most powerful weapons." (As a side note, it seems evident The Ocean of Death and The Sea of Death are just alternative names for The Sea of Acid.)

THE LAND OF THE LOST — "A prison colony that needs no guards. The acid sea prevents any escape. Chances of survival are very low in jungle area. No one sentenced to serve a



term here has ever returned."

SERPENT ISLAND — "It is believed that hundreds of millions of snakes, both large and small, infest this island. Members of the research expedition reported that it was impossible to take more than two strides without stepping on a serpent."

THE ROCKS — "Great towering needles of stone that rear thousands of feet out of the sea and serve as a sanctuary and nesting place for the gigantic flying creatures that swarm the area."

THE CRYSTAL CONTINENT — "Vast seams of combustible material have been burning for centuries beneath the surface of this area. The outer crust of the land contains the minerals used in the making of glass. Thus the whole continent appears to be made from solidified and molten glass. Creatures trapped in the molten glass are preserved for all time."

TV Century 21's *The Daleks* add to the picture. As well as making references to Darren, Davius, Dalazar, The Ocean of Ooze, and the mountainous Radiation Range, it tells us Skaro has a polar ice cap situated in the aptly name Polar Mountains (although we are also informed this region only became frozen when the detonation of the Daleks' neutron bombs shifted the "North Pole"); and a silicon-based life form: "While, in the desert, the Daleks discover a race of sand-creatures... and destroy them."

There's a ton of flora and fauna, with Skaro's jungles being often depicted in TV Century 21. Some of those life forms were even taken by the Daleks to other worlds. The Slyther (*The Dalek Invasion of Earth*) and the Varga plants (*Mission to the Unknown/The Daleks' Master Plan*) serving as extra security on the respective planets of Earth and Kembel.

The Dalek Book tells us of the rare Arkellis flower, which "will only take root in metal"

and exudes a sap later used in making the Golden Emperor's outer casing; the Urvacryl, "a dreaded, two-headed eel that inhabits The Lake of Mutations"; and the beautiful Lallapalange, harmony birds (now sadly extinct) which sang with two voices. Not to be outdone, *The Dalek World* introduces a huge slug-like monster called a Dredly, that the Daleks use as a guardian for their treasure house, whilst TV Century 21 introduced us to the Terrorkons; long-necked, two-headed dinosaur-like creatures, which would sometimes fight with single-headed, giant mutant eels (meanwhile the Urvacryl, no doubt suffering an identity crisis, kept well out of it).



Furthermore, in *Genesis of the Daleks*, we discover there was "a cave at the edge of the wasteland" that contained the horrific results of Davros' early animal experiments. Enter stage left, the oversized, mobile, leg-breaking clams!

Uniquely, Skaro once hosted metal life forms called Magnodons. *The Dalek Book* reveals the dead creature found in the petrified jungle during their first onscreen adventure "had the ability to attract its victims towards it. It was made of metal and was held together by an inner magnetic field. Now extinct because of the Neutron War which nearly destroyed Skaro."

Skaro's geophysics is pretty wacky too. For starters, *The Strata of Skaro* makes reference to the potential formation of an 'Icano', "like a volcano on Earth but instead of belching fire it throws up super frozen ice — so cold that contact with it kills instantly". Alternatively, the 1977 *Dalek Annual* refers to "Icecanos" where "molten snow and ice from the very core of Skaro erupts in enormous explosions covering many hundreds of square miles." There are also geysers of mercury from *The Daleks* strip, and *The Dalek Book* provides us with The Island of Gushing Gold, which is littered with statues (actually, the petrified forms of

beings who got too close) and the wonderfully named Oquolloquox, “a violent wind that rages through Skaro once every six years.”

The Dalek Pocket Book makes reference to the Decarian, “a great rainstorm which lasts for seven months”, and the Haarfa, “a moist mist that envelops large areas of Skaro at certain times of the year.” And throws in for good measure the Xanthox, “a valuable timber-yielding Skaro tree”.

Digging down into the core of Skaro, though, uncovers the greatest madness. The planet’s insides are stratified, like a Russian doll, with six levels each swallowing the other. Insanely, every layer has its own inhabitants.

Descending beneath the planet’s crust, in order of depth, we have:



CELLULAR LAYER — “Honeycombed with tunnels” and inhabited by what looks like some kind of owl/raccoon

hybrid. The walls of the passages are studded with diamonds, which the Daleks use “as cutting heads in their machine tools.”

THE ZONE OF ETERNAL DARK — “A darkness so dense that it can’t be penetrated by the most powerful light.” Things not unlike translucent, bipedal deep-sea fish are believed to live there.

THE STRATUM OF SCREAMING WINDS — “The constant hurricane force winds... have polished the rock to a glass-like smoothness”, whilst “the friction created... generates fantastic heats.” “The creatures that live here have sucker-like attachments to help them move” and are “insulated against the heat by layers of skin and fur-like asbestos.”



DEPTHS OF UNKNOWN — “Perhaps the most frightening area in Skaro’s depths.” Its masters are the multi-tentacled Krakis.

THE ABYSS OF DEATH — “The rock walls need food. The ‘living rock’ closes in on anything that ventures along its tunnels, and crushes it.”

THE MORASS — This zone contains millions of passages, like a gigantic sponge. “The Sponge People ‘grow’ here. When fully developed, [they] can detach themselves and ‘walk’.” (The inverted commas are not mine, so presumably, the Sponge People aren’t exactly growing and aren’t exactly walking. Perhaps they aggregate or coalesce. We can also assume they’re not bipedal.) They’re highly developed animals of the same species as “the sponge you use in your bath.” Oh, and they’re “deadly.”

THE ICE HEART OF SKARO — It is “approximately 10,000 miles” from the surface of the planet to its very core.

Absolutely mental. Or, in other words, brilliant.

And the cherry on the cake?

There is one previously described phenomenon which is missing from this list: the Griltis. First mentioned in *The Dalek Book* “it is the underground river of Skaro that never rises to the surface. It is supposed to be a huge tunnel of crude oil but probably belongs to Skaroian myth and legend. Skaro is not very rich in oil supplies.”

While for sprinkles, *The Dalek Outer Space Book* painstakingly chronicles Skaro’s history: The Beginning, The Siletarian Age, The Planistavian Age, The Thalistanian Age, The Sparasunian Age, The Age of Unreason (where “the thousand years of war began on the first day of the new calendar”), and now The Year of the Dalek; while the 1976 *Dalek Annual* provides an Earth—Skaro timescale, revealing “Earth’s Year One is the same as Skaro’s Year Seven Thousand and Eleven, and that a Dalek year is half the length of an Earth year.”

Wow.

Are there other worlds in *Doctor Who* even half as cool as Skaro?

Well, obviously... Vortis, Vortis, Vortis. I love *The Web Planet*, both as TV and in Bill Strutton’s wonderful novelisation. It’s the only story where onscreen *Who* was completely alien, in every possible way. And I rate Solos. Like Ribos, it has extraordinarily long seasons with savage temperature differences, which on Solos affect biology, as well as culture.

Peladon, Metebelis III, and Gallifrey may be loved, but I think this is because of their place in continuity, rather than any intrinsically interesting features. Telos and Mondas are marginally more successful at capturing the imagination, even though we’ve never visited the latter in the TV series, and it exists rather as a fabled entity than a living world.



As a rule, current *Doctor Who* has appeared nervous about alien environments, perhaps seeing them as challenging for twenty-first century production values. Christopher Eccleston’s era never even left Earth’s orbit. *Midnight* and *The Rings of Akhaten* did both have memorable locations, but while *The Impossible Planet* has greater impact, it’s really the black hole that makes it special — the rest is just a rock. When the show thoroughly addresses the glamour and sense of wonder of space travel in episodes such as *Mummy on the Orient Express*, this tends not to involve astronomical bodies.

Chris Chibnall’s storytelling, however, does remind me in some respects of Terry Nation’s. It’s not as good, but tales like *The Ghost Monument* and *Ascension of the Cybermen/The Timeless Children*, explore travel in the way Nation did by treating the

universe they’ve created as real. Everything in a Russell T Davies or Steven Moffat script happens for character-based reasons, but the planet Desolation is, arguably, the antagonist in *The Ghost Monument*. Trekking across it is hot, tiring, and takes a long time. Vehicles need fuel. Water is dangerous to drink. None of it has anything to do with characterisation, but it’s still the basis of the scenic action. You could imagine Nation writing like this.

Similarly, *Ascension of the Cybermen/The Timeless Children* again feels to me like ‘setting as character’. The immense debris field of damaged spaceships and smashed Cybermen gives a hitherto unrealised scale to the Cyber Wars. Indeed, the Cybermen’s offscreen presence dwarfs their onscreen presence in most other adventures. These are not character-based story beats; they’re conveying the scale and effort of space travel and making the Cybermen impressive in a way we’d never experienced before in *Doctor Who*.

For these reasons, Chibnall’s storytelling feels, to me, like a return to Nation’s style, and he would manage a juicier exploration of Skaro than either Davies or Moffat — though none of them would have a hope of matching Nation.

In conclusion: Hartnell’s Skaro was definitely the weirdest, and the spin-off material added layer upon layer so making it the greatest planet we encounter. Researching this article has made me want to write pre-Dalek adventures set on Skaro... Just imagine a Skaroian equivalent of Verne’s *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*...

Mouth-watering!



TRACKING THE TIMELINES

By Ian Scales

Back in the summer of 1978, I woke to find my TV Comic issue #1386 had been posted through the door. *Doctor Who* had concluded its fifteenth season on television a few months earlier with *The Invasion of Time*, so I appreciated the opportunity to read more stories, and this edition featured a brand new Fourth Doctor adventure. Imagine my astonishment to find Tom Baker being menaced by an old enemy, but not the Sontarans or other recent foes: they were the Quarks!

I vaguely recalled one of these robots featuring on a Weetabix card released in 1975 and I knew from my copy of *The Making of Doctor Who* guidebook the Quarks were supposed to be servants of some creatures ominously called the Dominators. However the comic versions were clearly acting autonomously, so I concluded the writer had forgotten details about their nature over the ensuing years. Of course, I was later to discover, the strip story actually originated in 1969 and had been updated with Baker's face, redrawn over Patrick Troughton's by the artist, John Canning.



I can only imagine how children who had watched *The Dominators* might have responded to seeing the Quarks again, especially as they are so different in origin and purpose. But in 1978, despite these

anomalies, this adventure thrilled the child me for weeks!

My most nostalgic memories of *Doctor Who* in the 1970s revolve around the wider 1960s' fiction I found in second-hand books and comics. Even some contemporary releases contained earlier material. In particular, I recall *The Daleks* strip (wonderful and featuring such oddities as the bulbous-headed Golden Emperor of the Daleks) that first appeared in the TV Century 21 comic and from which stories were reprinted for the 1977 and 1978 Dalek annuals, *The Amazing World of Doctor Who* promotional book offered by Typhoo Tea, and the Mighty Midget Doctor Who Comic (free with #1292 of TV Comic).



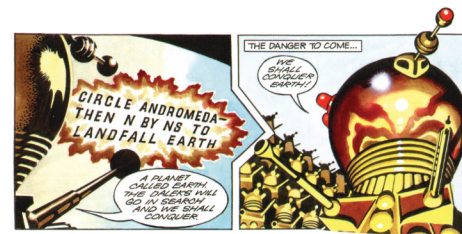
As my childhood discovery of the spin-off fiction had been divorced from the broadcasting of then-concurrent episodes, I got the idea of revisiting such adventures alongside a timeline of TV screenings. This would provide an enticing opportunity to put myself in the place of a child first experiencing those additional stories, asking questions, and uncovering some surprises on the way.

Various publications proved invaluable to my quest, including the TV Comic-orientated fourth issue of the magazine Vworp Vworp!; Paul Scoones' *The Comic Strip Companion 1964-1979*; and Paul Magrs' *The Annual Years*. Paul Castle's *The 500 Year Diary, Volume One (1963-1973)* was particularly useful, detailing as it does the actual publication date of the comics for his timelines rather than the later ones displayed on the covers.

The first surprise came from *The 500 Year Diary*, where I discovered that TV Century 21's *The Daleks* strip had commenced about

a month after the broadcast of *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* — in fact, the date of issue, 20 January 1965, occurred three days prior to the Saturday transmission of part two of *The Romans*. The strip was to continue for another two years into the Troughton era. The Dalek Emperor would only discover the route to Earth in the comic published on 11 January 1967, also three days prior to the showing of *The Underwater Menace* Episode 1.

The closing panel from the strip had promised “danger to come” as the Emperor declares: “We shall conquer Earth!” The next fiction appearance for the Daleks would occur less than a week later in TV Comic (16 January 1967). And yet, here, during the first two adventures, they are either intent on destroying the robotic Trods or avoiding the Doctor's revenge, and while they do eventually turn their attention to Earth (with a “giant Exterminator”) there is no obvious connection between the former and latter narratives. On TV it would be another four months before *The Evil of the Daleks* televised their attempt to conquer Earth (as opposed to annihilating it) — a serial which also features an Emperor Dalek. So was the promise of “danger to come” intended as a subtle lead-in? Probably not. Whereas in *Evil*, the Daleks recognise the Doctor as a known threat, he is markedly absent from TV Century 21.



Could it be, then, a hint towards the proposed Dalek series that Nation was developing with American money to be shown sometime after *Evil*? Possibly, but it seems more likely these stories were intended to take us directly back to *The Dalek Book*, which itself featured the Daleks' invasion of Earth's solar system. Still, *The Dalek Book* was first published on 30

September 1964, whilst *The Daleks* saga did not finish until early 1967. To complicate things further, in 1997 Doctor Who Magazine printed a six-part adventure that continued directly on from the final TV Century 21 Dalek instalment, which, albeit hugely enjoyable, does tend to challenge the ouroboros nature of the original!



Without a doubt, the strip's cliff-hanger could also be seen as both a prologue to *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* TV serial and the movie remake, *Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150 A.D.* Indeed, if any 1960s tie-in Dalek fiction could stake a claim to herald events for TV and cinema, then *The Dalek Book* has some merit. I wonder if a child reading this glorious publication over the winter holidays was hoping to see the small screen arrival of the Emperor Dalek?

All the same, there is potentially an earlier piece of fiction as detailed in Castle's book: the text and picture story *Doctor Who and the Daleks* featuring the Voords from *The Keys of Marinus* (April/May 1964). According to Castle, the adventure was disseminated as collectible cards under the Cadet Sweets brand.

The cards have a rushed quality, with directions for the artist, Richard Jennings, accidentally included in some of the text on their reverse side. According to Scoones in Vworp Vworp Volume Three, a licence was agreed with the BBC on 1 May 1964, so is it possible they were quickly produced for a summer release?

Scoones confirms they are “among the earliest items of *Doctor Who* merchandise”, but as Jennings also worked on *The Dalek Book*, the first set of 25 cards may well have been meant as a tie-in of sorts, that would push the release back to “late 1964”.

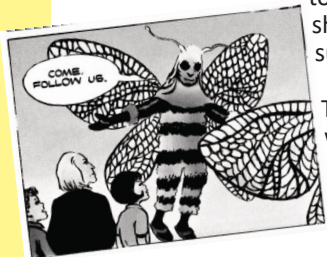
Card #33, from the second set in early 1965, specifically mentions *The Dalek Book*, and can definitely claim at least one accolade —

the first meeting of the Doctor with the Golden Dalek Emperor — even showing them enjoying a banquet together on the final card!



The Voords would return again in 1965 for the earliest *Dr Who Annual*, over a year after their defeat in *The Keys of Marinus*, while the Zarbi, Menoptera (sic), and Sensorites also crop up within its pages. *The 500 Year Diary* estimates the publication date to be close to the Muller hardback release of *Doctor Who and the Zarbi* (the novelisation of *The Web Planet* from earlier in the year). 1965 seems to have witnessed a relative profusion of Zarbi fiction. Just two days after watching the closing episode of *The Web Planet*, a child could pick up a copy of TV Comic #693 and read about the Doctor's return to Vortis.

From today's perspective, the first TV Comic stories appear to be set in a parallel universe. However, at the time there was nothing which contradicted the programme as broadcast, especially if you hypothesise the adventures took place after the Doctor's travels with his TV companions had ended. As for John and Gillian, again, there was no direct evidence for Susan being the Doctor's only grandchild: conceivably the Doctor may have transported his entire extended family to twentieth century Earth in his space/time travel machine. Therefore, the strip's sequel to *The Web Planet* should come as no surprise.



The disruption came with a new story on 19 December 1966, when without any explanation, the

Doctor changed appearance, bringing the comic strip in line with the 29 October broadcast of *The Tenth Planet* Episode 4 where William Hartnell relinquished the role to Patrick Troughton.

Perversely, while this change relied on TV Comic readers being aware of onscreen developments, the advent of the Second Doctor means that there was no longer a space for the First Doctor to meet his grandchildren and whisk them off to do battle with the Kleptons.

The fact John and Gillian are physically missing for most of the Second Doctor's opening four-week adventure may suggest this concerned the writers or was an experiment to see how well the strip fared without them. As it is, the concluding panel sees their return, with the Doctor saying, "I missed your appearance children! You must come with me next time." Nevertheless, from here on, John and Gillian are frequently absent from the bulk of the stories.

Equally, they no longer call the Doctor "Grandfather", and all familial references cease entirely by the third episode of their consequent adventure. Paul Scoones believes the latter decision may have been "prompted by the new Doctor's younger appearance", which is fair in that, while all grandfathers are not old and grey, Hartnell certainly fitted the stereotype better than Troughton.



John and Gillian would remain with the strip for a further year and a half until the Doctor enters a fortune teller's tent to be told by "Madam Rosa" his subsequent trip in the Tardis will involve "a rendezvous with deadly robots!" and packs them off to "Zebadee University".

This "deadly" encounter commenced publication on 26 August 1968, placing it between Episodes 3 and 4 of *The*

Dominators. After dumping his grandchildren, the Doctor boards the Tardis, materialises in a castle cellar in present-day Scotland, and witnesses the arrival of a flying saucer. From which emerges a party of Quarks!



Bizarrely, while the TV Comic Doctor states that he has never run into the Quarks before, a week later, consecutive with the Doctor and Jamie battling the Dominators and their Quarks servants on TV, the Highland Scot is introduced in what is declared to be a Doctor/companion reunion!

Jamie vanished from the strip on 24 February 1969 with no explanation, whereas his counterpart was to remain onscreen for a further 17 weeks.

Another disconnect occurs when the Cybermen make it into TV Comic, first appearing on 25 September 1967, just two days after *The Tomb of the Cybermen* Episode 4 was transmitted. This timing was surely intentional, but in design, the comic strip cyborgs resemble those from *The Tenth Planet* shown a year previously. Scoones surmises this was because the artists were only provided with the earlier images, but even so, over the next two years, no attempt was made to match them with those in the current television episodes.



There was, however, a more concerted effort to link events at the close of the Troughton

era. The TV Comic stories follow directly on from the last episode of *The War Games*, with one difference. Just over a week after the Doctor is exiled to Earth by the Time Lords onscreen, the TV Comic Doctor finds himself living in a "swanky London hotel" whilst maintaining his Troughton visage.

In the build up to the Jon Pertwee era, the comic continues with the Second Doctor's adventures five months beyond Troughton's exit from the role. This ended during November 1969 with the reveal he'd escaped from the Time Lords before they could alter him, but it also afforded the opportunity to portray the first "change of appearance" sequence for an incumbent in cartoon form, as the Doctor is carried back to his Tardis by two Time Lord animated scarecrows to induce his metamorphosis into Pertwee.



The strip then took a seven-week break, resuming again on 12 January 1970, two days after the Episode 2 broadcast of *Spearhead from Space*. It was introduced with the following block of text:

"Given a new body and banished to Earth by the Time Lords, Dr. Who has found it necessary to attach himself to Brigadier Lethbridge Stewart's organisation U.N.I.T. (United Nations Intelligence Taskforce) in order to obtain the various 'spares' he needs to repair the damaged Tardis. The Brigadier supplies the Doctor with expensive parts in return for the use of his services..."

Yet, despite this informed statement, the discontinuities still abound. On 4 May the Doctor was joined by Liz Shaw, and his vintage car, named "Bessie" in the TV series, but frequently, and inexplicably, referred to as "Betsy" in the comic strip. Even so, the car was to outlive the Brigadier, UNIT, and Liz, who made their final appearance in TV Comic on 24 August. Once again, no explanation was given for this sudden absence, although, behind the scenes, the

TV show's producer, Barry Letts, had decided Liz was too intelligent to serve as a sidekick to the Doctor.



When subsequent enquiries were made about her replacement, Jo Grant, they were told, "Katy Manning does not want her likeness used in any kind of merchandising." This decision may well have stemmed from the Kellogg's Sugar Smacks "Free! Dr. Who Badge" offer, where the artist had given Miss Grant a rather large nose!

As for Lethbridge-Stewart, he was originally devised by the writing team of Mervyn Haisman and Henry Lincoln, who were none too pleased to discover the character was being used in the comic without their permission. This mirrored a similar dispute in July 1968, involving another of their creations: the aforementioned Quarks.

On 15 February 1971, the *Doctor Who* strip transferred to TV Comic's new sister publication Countdown, which was targeted at an older readership. The change initiated a general upgrade in both artwork and storytelling, but unfortunately, the magazine was not to prove a long-lasting success, and, two and a half years later, *Doctor Who* had returned to its older sibling.



My own personal journey into the world of TV Comic didn't start until 9 August 1976 with the Fourth Doctor and "Sarah-Jane" (sic) adventure *Mind Snatch*. Sarah departed for good on 24 January 1977, her TV alter ego having left the programme some three months previously.

Roughly six months after her onscreen debut, Leela entered the pages on 4 July 1977. She stayed until 2 January 1978, before disappearing six days prior to the showing of *Underworld*, Part Two. While Louise Jameson had concluded her recording commitments by 16 December, Part Six of *The Invasion of Time* wouldn't be transmitted until 11 March 1978, leaving comic readers to wonder why she had disappeared.

By July of 1978, the comic had commenced reprinting old strips modified to feature the Fourth Doctor. They began with that Quark story I remember so well, but this was the only Troughton adventure to get a make-over, the rest coming from the Third Doctor era.

Did Haisman and Lincoln know about this republishing, and if so, were they able to extract another payment? I put these questions directly to Paul Scoones, who responded:

"I suspect it may have slipped under the radar. It's likely the kerfuffle with the Quarks a decade earlier was forgotten by 1978, and perhaps the TV Comic editor wasn't even aware the Quarks were from the TV series. Given the intention to cut costs, it seems unlikely they'd have knowingly selected a story which had the potential to incur additional rights' fees. This is assuming of course that the original terms stipulated fees for reprints."

4 May 1979 proved to be the last occasion the *Doctor Who* strip appeared in TV Comic, at which point I cancelled my subscription, no doubt contributing to the publication's demise five years later! It also marks the terminus of my adult revisit.

Reflecting on these strips may not have captured the excitement I felt as a child, but puzzling over the many, surprising or frankly baffling choices made during their production has proved an engaging task. I hope you have found it so too.



LOST IN THE DARK DIMENSION

By Paul Driscoll

*"We are such stuff as dreams are made on;
and our little life is rounded with a sleep."*

- *The Fourth Doctor*

As a child growing up in the 1970s and early 80s, I'm sure I wasn't alone in feeling hugely disappointed when I learnt Tom Baker would only be making a cameo appearance in 1983's *The Five Doctors*. The publicity still of the titular Time Lords, a Madam Tussauds' waxwork propped up between the other Doctors as the stand-in for my favourite incarnation, further rubbed salt into the wound — a permanent reminder Tom had said "No". At least William Hartnell had a living double, and a very good one too.



Of course, I was still full of anticipation for the special — I can recall how it felt as I ran like a lunatic to WH Smith to pick up that foil-covered accompanying Target book on the night before the UK transmission, and the next day thrill of watching Hartnell holding his lapels as he delivered his iconic speech before the opening credits rolled. But I've

also harboured a sense of ingratitude because it all went ahead without a successful negotiation for Tom's return. While it was magical to view footage from the abandoned *Shada*, there was, oh, the ignominy, having my favourite Doctor trapped in a time vortex for the duration of a celebratory adventure. I couldn't help feeling it would have been better if he wasn't in it at all. Quite apart from anything else, the excuse for his absence lacked imagination.

Almost ten years of repressed hurt (I'd always felt I had no right to complain) were finally resolved for me when Doctor Who Magazine announced Tom Baker would be returning to the Tardis in a movie-length thirtieth anniversary special, *The Dark Dimension*.

This would be no cameo: the Fourth Doctor was to star, with the other surviving Doctors playing key roles in what would, nonetheless, effectively be his story; something which wasn't met with universal approval. Footage exists of Jon Pertwee, Peter Davison, Colin Baker, and Sylvester McCoy mocking the script during the recording of *The Airzone Solution*, indignant they hadn't been given equal billing and convincing themselves the fans would not have liked it at all. Pertwee goes so far as to suggest something along the lines of *The Five Doctors* would have been much more acceptable: "That's what the fans want, they want a jolly with all the Doctors together, equal."

To my mind, at least, Pertwee was wrong. Had the script been made, it would have felt like a corrective, redressing the imbalance of the last special. I would have lapped it up.



In the end, it wasn't to be, and the reasons behind the cancellation are well documented. Instead, we were treated to the gimmick-filled *Dimensions in Time* which took itself way too seriously with a premise that would have worked better if written as a spoof. Tom Baker had become involved in what was, in essence, an extended sketch specifically written to give the surviving Doctors equal billing (you got what you wanted Jon, Peter, Colin, and Sylv) but it must have felt like a poor substitute for the full-length script Tom had enthused about.

Over the years, we fans of Doctor Four convinced ourselves the cancelled special would have been wonderful, and the lack of any onscreen revival following *Doctor Who: The Television Movie* in 1996 reinforced our conviction this had been a missed opportunity. We were the ones lost in the dark dimension, while, in a parallel universe, *Doctor Who* was back in style and the special had got made. But then a version of the script was leaked online, and Tom Baker's positive assessment became very much the minority opinion. The other surviving Doctors had argued the scripting of the special should never have been given to a fan, because top screenwriters would have queued up for the gig (a somewhat ironic sentiment given they were filming for a fan production at the time!) while Philip Segal (the producer of *Doctor Who: The Television Movie*) was even more scathing, describing it as 'awful, really embarrassing [and] silly'.

But are the criticisms justified? Was Tom blinded to the script's faults because it gave him a leading role, or were his fellow actors' views a case of sour grapes? Could Segal have been so wrapped up in his proposed new series bible, he was always going to dismiss an alternative approach? Is the fact the special was written by the controversial Adrian Rigelsford preventing a fair assessment? Can a never-produced script be judged from its rehearsal draft, given things would have subsequently undergone further revisions and cuts during production?

For those unfamiliar with the original, here's a brief synopsis of the plot:

We start in the not-so-distant future of 2525. An unnamed alien entity has ravaged the Earth, leaving the human race at risk of extinction; an apocalyptic scenario reinforced by a caption: "The Last Winter." In the wastelands of England, an all-female resistance group led by Summerfield (who knowledgeable viewers are expected to infer is Bernice from the *Virgin New Adventures* novels) is on the hunt for the creature, planning to send it back to the dawn of creation in the belief only an event as powerful as the Big Bang can destroy it. Instead, they find the body of its latest victim: the Seventh Doctor. The soldiers ("eco-troops") know exactly who the Time Lord is. After a makeshift funeral where his body and the Tardis are placed upon a raft and set alight at sea, they return to their mission, vowing to complete what the Doctor had started.

Having erected a time vortex generator in a derelict car park, Summerfield and her team successfully lure the creature into its path. As they track its journey backward through time, another entrance to the vortex opens up, enabling it to escape into 1936 and set about manipulating history. Disguised as the human scientist Hawkspur, it also dramatically interferes with the Doctor's timeline by preventing the Fourth Doctor's regeneration after his fall from the Pharos Project radio telescope (*Logopolis*). Summerfield uses "an open-ended voltron-

wave transmitter" (a time travel device built by the Seventh Doctor) to pursue the creature, and arrives with her team in 1999.



Meanwhile, the now aged Fourth Doctor has met up with his old friend, the retired Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, and Ace, who calls herself Dorothy and works as a school teacher. She has no memory of travelling with the Seventh Doctor, and she also has a love interest, fellow teacher Alex Stewart who is destined to become another victim of the Hawkspur monster.

'Ace' is frequently disturbed by visions and ghosts from the Doctor's original timeline. Later they are all joined by Summerfield, who is now the sole survivor of the resistance group. The mission to destroy Hawkspur brings them into contact with other Doctors, as well as various enemies, both actual foes from the past and copies created by the entity.

The Seventh Doctor explains to Ace he projected part of his mind into hers to preserve his knowledge of the creature, and this is the source of her hallucinations. The Time Lords then transported her into the past to live as Dorothy.

Flanked by fake Daleks, Ice Warriors, and Cybermen, Hawkspur duels with the Fourth Doctor at the former's mansion house and is eventually defeated. Ace and Summerfield both die in the battle, but the Doctor has connected Summerfield's voltron-wave transmitter to the Tardis console and when the Brigadier hits the button the Doctor is able to throw the creature into the ensuing vortex where it is destroyed. "Badly injured from the fight", he then regenerates into the

Seventh Doctor, restoring the original timeline and bringing Ace, Summerfield, and the members of her team, back into existence.

Despite some derivative aspects to the script and its poor critical reception, there has been no shortage of takers when it comes to fan recreations of *The Dark Dimension*. Ian Levine produced a version in the style of the 'Loose Canon missing episodes' reconstructions, with the insertion of various stock and composite images; a full-length animation was released by James Walker and Jay Hale, in tandem with a limited edition novelisation; and most recently Pharos Features have uploaded to YouTube a 'Big Finish-style' audio adaptation. All three productions are supported by some stellar cast members, yet also suffer from the inconsistencies which are so often apparent when filling up the numbers with volunteers who lack training, direction, and the necessary skill sets. Nevertheless, these not-for-profit works should all be regarded as ambitious undertakings of a generally high standard.



What is immediately noticeable from the adaptations is that their success is correlative to how far the producers are prepared to take liberties with the source material. Whilst the animators at Season26B have added a number of clever, if sometimes distracting, visual references to the revived series, the script itself is followed largely to the letter (with the notable exceptions of Ace echoing the Seventh Doctor's final televised dialogue, word for word, and a lovely post-credit sequence involving the twelfth Doctor and Clara).

As a result, the movie comes in at 110 minutes and loses momentum precisely at those points in which post-production would



likely have been ruthless with the original. Furthermore, we might expect some of the Fourth Doctor's lines to have been considerably improved by Tom Baker's own changes during the

recording.

The other actors, had they agreed to take part, could also have put their own stamp on the dialogue, which would have allayed Colin Baker's concerns that the roles were interchangeable. To be fair to Rigelsford, the lines provided are appropriately in character to each Doctor, even if Colin was quite rightly annoyed to be given scenes staged in a courtroom. Following his previous appearance in *The Trial of a Time Lord*, this just comes across as lazy repetition, though the Brigadier accidentally walking onto the witness stand is one of the comedic highlights of an otherwise fairly humourless story.

Partly through the lack of visual references, the audio version has made substantial changes to the script, but in so doing the pacing is greatly improved. Levine's production is the most jarring, not because of the performances, but due to the disjointed effect of the 'here's one I made earlier' stock photographs. It also suffers from having the most conservative take on the source material, although the casting of the superb Peter Miles as Hawkspur, together with Sylvester McCoy and Sophie

Aldred, back playing the Seventh Doctor and Ace, benefits the production greatly.

So where, exactly, does the source material fall short?

Any celebratory feature-length *Doctor Who* adventure is expected to include at least some of the programme's iconic monsters. However, according to Rigelsford, "Part of the problem with the Daleks was that there's some contractual clause which meant that if any Dalek story is done it's got to have Davros in it". Clearly, this would have put the fictional creator of the Daleks in competition with Hawkspur, so to get around the rights issue he made the decision to turn them into his villain's shapeshifting puppets. Unfortunately, the fact they still look, sound, and act like Daleks, suggests this ruse would have stood little chance of deceiving the Nation estate.

Other creatures do pop up, including a fake Hawkspur Yeti at a railway station, and genuine Ice Warriors in the courtroom scenes. Ace is also introduced to a "Cybercommander", described by the Fifth Doctor as "One of their more nastier hybrids." According to Rigelsford, this was to be a new type of Cyberman, influenced by H R Giger's creature design for the film *Alien* (1979), and "looked terrifying. It had holes in its knuckles and there was a point where it held up its hand, made a fist, and six-inch



blades shot out of its knuckles! It was like Wolverine out of the *X-Men* comics; Cyberine!"

Exciting stuff, but these appearances are still no more than walk-on parts, which, like the scenarios involving the Third, Fifth, and Sixth Doctors, would have benefited from being made more integral to the overall narrative.

Without question, actor availability, as well as copyright issues, must also have exercised Rigelsford's mind, so this may have been a conscious and somewhat canny decision, allowing both Doctors and aliens to be substituted or removed with little fuss and without major script changes. As the writer said back in 1993, "It all depends really who wants to do it. Tom certainly wants to do it, Sylvester wants to do it. I don't know about Colin Baker, and Peter Davison had really made it quite clear these days that he doesn't really want to be associated with *Doctor Who* that much."

As it is, while the rehearsal script lacks polish, it isn't without merit. For starters, the conceit explaining the Fourth Doctor's return is so much better than the facile explanation for his absence in *The Five Doctors*. The adventure firstly teases the irreversible death of the Seventh Doctor in the standard timeline, only, in a surprise twist, to reveal the Fourth Doctor's regeneration has been prevented. In more experienced hands this would have made for compulsive viewing and is not far removed from some of the plotting we've become accustomed to since the 2005 revival.

For example, Russell T Davies' *Turn Left* follows a similar approach, as it also predicated itself on the death of the Doctor. Then we have *The Sound of Drums*, where the Master, like Hawkspur, becomes Prime Minister and, after accusing his political associates of self-serving hypocrisy, massacres them. Indeed, Hawkspur goes further and has the Queen exterminated! Finally, both adventures end with the new timeline being deleted.

As for Steven Moffat, Captain Jack's "vortex manipulator" appears to be Summerfield's "voltron-wave transmitter" under another name. Likewise, he may have taken further

inspiration from *The Dark Dimension* for *The Impossible Astronaut*; the Doctor's body being laid to rest with a Viking funeral. Equally, there is also a "wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey" element to the explanation given by the Fifth Doctor as to why he can still nonetheless exist: "The universe is a complex mass of timelines, full of countless possibilities."

And further, justification for Rigelsford's determination to prioritise story over convention can be found in the fiftieth anniversary special, where Moffat also resisted fan expectations he'd include all surviving Doctors in equal measure, focusing instead on Matt Smith, David Tennant, and Christopher Eccleston substitute Sir John Hurt. The overwhelmingly positive reception to *The Day of the Doctor* confirms viewers would rather find the 'special' in the quality of the script than in a slavish attempt to please everyone.

Several components from *The Dark Dimension* seem also to have inspired Chris Chibnall's *Doctor Who: Flux*, with its apocalyptic overtones, romantic subplot (Dorothy and Alex/Vinder and Bel) waking visions of lost and forgotten adventures, the Grand Serpent's changing of human history through infiltration of the establishment, a team of soldiers led by the Doctor, working to imprison an enemy "at the dawn of the universe" (Swarm) who then escapes to cause havoc, and the teasing of a radical break with continuity which ends up being curtailed.



Even Philip Segal's contempt is rendered hollow when we consider he also sets his TV movie in 1999; begins it with the death of the Seventh Doctor; features a hospital with a sinister administrator; shows an alien entity that melds with a human being; tries to destroy the Earth; and is defeated when sucked into a vortex. Further, both stories conclude with a return to the status quo via a time-reversal which restores the Doctor's companions to life.

And yet there is something else to consider. The key to the heart of this adventure, I would argue, lies in the script's final coda, where the Brigadier is seen to place a wreath at a gravestone, bearing the inscription "Alexander Lethbridge-Stewart. 1969–1979."

In 1979 Rigelsford was also aged ten, and during December, John Nathan-Turner took over as producer of *Doctor Who*.

If we take this on board, *The Dark Dimension* can be seen as a repudiation of everything that followed. Peter Davison, Colin Baker, and Sylvester McCoy are all, by implication, erased from the programme's continuity. Tom Baker's era is extended for another 18 years and concluded with a more dynamically heroic trigger for his Doctor's regeneration than the one he was previously granted and the actor himself had criticised. Once we understand this, it gives a deeper,

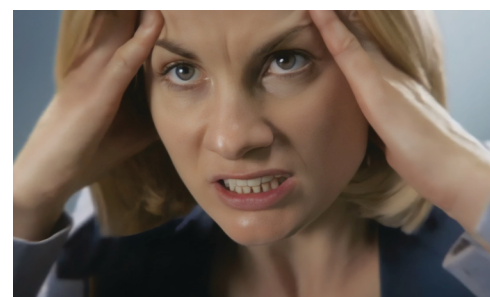
more poignant meaning to the stricken Time Lord's question to Ace "Did I die a noble death, this time?"

In fact, this retroactive continuity appears to stretch even further back, in a scene when the Brigadier delivers "a large cardboard box" containing the Doctor's original Season 12 costume, symbolically returning the character to the era when the much-lauded Philip Hinchcliffe was producing the series. "You know this is the original one", says the Fourth Doctor, seemingly about his scarf. "I thought I'd mislaid it for good."

Of course, ultimately, this dark and heretical dimension is brought to an end with the Seventh Doctor's reinstatement, and his enquiry of Ace: "What do you remember about Alex?"

"Alex? Alex who?"

"Trust me, it was never meant to be."



Storytelling has always been central to how we make sense of our world. We use both to help us understand ourselves and others, learning methods to build continuities; linear connections which form coherent sequences out of disparate events, providing way-markers to guide, and anchors to ground us.

This mental-framing conditions our minds to

look for threads and associations in everything we encounter — even a television series dating back nearly sixty years. But what sort of consistent pattern can we hope to find in a programme that has undergone just about every sort of industry change possible, from wholesale shifts in cast and crew to rejigging its production format and scheduling, while reorienting its narrative direction from the pseudo-historical to science fiction and to fantasy? Indeed, some seasons of *Doctor Who* are so distinct they could belong to an entirely different series.

Arguably, the show's only persistent feature is an enduring capacity for reinvention, so why for many *Doctor Who* fans should the issue of its continuity be such a big deal?

Former script editor Christopher H Bidmead once said, "the recordings of the Doctor's adventures have become corrupted over time... it's all down to flaws in the Matrix" (Whotopia Issue 14, August 2008). This would seem to end the discussion, yet arguments still rage. Isn't it enough to view the Doctor's exploits as exciting events which may not always be linked in a logical and consistent way?

We humans seem driven to tease a coherent sequence from the hundreds of *Doctor Who* episodes, in the teeth of its disparate nature. It's an example of Descartes' 'conceivability argument' — that if something can be conjectured, then this also makes it logically possible. In short, we can't think about a television series as extensive as *Doctor Who* without invoking some form of continuity.

The debates about its continuity and lore, date for the most part, to the late 1960s, and the decision of the Season Six production team to lift the lid on the Doctor's origins.



Suddenly the mysterious time traveller had a whole backstory we needed to unravel. But let's not forget the context here. In early 1969, it wasn't certain the programme would return for another season. Had it been abandoned, the big reveal in the last episode of *The War Games* would stand as a *Prisoner*-esque parting gift of exposition, catalysing theories about the Doctor's beginnings in perpetuity.

However, intended or not, discarding a sizeable chunk of the enigma shrouding the Doctor was to set a powerful precedent. Over the ensuing years, he was made an unwilling agent of the Time Lords, framed for the murder of the Time Lord President, and later elected to the Presidency himself. His origins would become as brightly lit as some of the studio sets used during *Arc of Infinity* and *The Five Doctors*. Later adventures would see the Daleks and Cybermen engaging with Gallifreyan artefacts of monstrous power through time travel scenarios, and another trip to a Time Lord courtroom. Gallifreyan lore was even extended to include Time Lord founders, in the persons of Omega and Rassilon. Indeed, by the close of the original series, unpacking the Doctor's undisclosed had become routine for the scriptwriters.

The tradition was picked up with especial enthusiasm by the team behind the 1996 *Television Movie*, who looked into reworking the programme's entire mythology from



start to finish. John Leekley put together a writers' guide (informally known as the 'Leekley Bible') setting out various re-imaginings, from the Doctor searching for his

long-lost father, Ulysses, to Tardis-powering 'Time-crystals' housing the spirit of his grandfather, Borusa. Post-2005, the relaunched series has seen the Time Lords variously destroyed, restored, and destroyed again; and since 1963 the Doctor has gone from crotchety runaway in a faulty time machine, to the very source of the Time Lord species. As an example of continuity, it would be difficult to imagine a more knotted and contradictory tale. It's almost as if the series were being made up as it went along. Crazy thinking! Right?

The need to impose structure on our surroundings seems rooted in human psychology, at least as argued by the Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant. Temporal and spatial conceptions, he postulated, are internal to the mind rather than objective features of the physical world. Kant's Scottish contemporary, David Hume, considered causation under a similar header. In autobiographies, we make linkages to see how we have arrived at the present through a sort of internal logic which maps out our journey from the past: some might call it destiny, others coincidence, but either way there is a linear sequence to things panning out. So our obsession with continuity could be seen as a natural part of our understanding of extended narrative; and order-seeking, in the context of *Doctor Who*, essentially the same thing.

Psychology notwithstanding, it's surely no coincidence this obsession coincides with the shows' earliest devotees coming of age to discover a forum for discussion through the rise of fandom. It's not surprising they tried collectively to make sense of a fiction that is so remarkable for its chameleon-like qualities. Whereas programmes such as *Star Trek* and its numerous spin-offs have tended, by and large, to stick with its original mission statement, "to boldly go [into space] where no man [one] has gone before", *Doctor Who* has chosen a labyrinth of pathways, impelling the desire to solder together disparate story pieces into an apparently rational whole — a 'whole' which, even after the best attempts, still contains

discrepancies and inconsistencies (e.g. dating the UNIT adventures) and, in turn, requires us to introduce connective tissue through more myth-making, perpetuating the need in the process.

Another way of thinking about this can be found in the work of the twentieth century physicist and philosopher, Thomas Kuhn, though it requires we substitute scientific understandings for myth. Kuhn refers to all-embracing bodies of knowledge as paradigms and states that where these framings become overwrought with anomalies — observable events which do not match the established paradigm — a revolution is triggered, eventually causing a leap to an all-new paradigm (e.g. the jump from Newton's absolute laws to Einstein's principles of relativity).

On an entirely different scale, we might translate this theory into the development of *Doctor Who* and its shifts from science to science fiction, as the ideas from one season, or production team, were reconfigured by the next. A sort of narrative evolution by revolution.

A Kuhnian approach can explain any inconsistencies in progression, suggesting otherwise contrasting stories are still part of an overall sequence until it's necessary to jump from one model (e.g. Philip Hinchcliffe's horror pastiches) to another (Graham Williams' fanciful humour). It might also lead us to claim we are witnessing different time-stream versions of the Doctor, each with its own, unique cohesion.

But it only explains why there is such inconsistency, not the search for continuity in and of itself, making the aforementioned



'conceivability argument' the best fit. Is it really enough, though, to assert that continuity is simply a psychological phenomenon? Surely it represents something more substantive than a state of mind? The Kuhnian approach also leaves us with questions, so could an alternative model provide a more satisfying answer?

Let's return to what we understand by the term. If continuity is the rational sequencing of events, involving the recurring character of the Doctor and Tardis, Bidmead's concept appears defensible. After all, what does it really matter if contexts change and characters are redeveloped if the underlying principles remain the same? The Master reimagined as Missy, Time Lord society in tatters, regeneration no longer confined by gender or ethnicity — these are significant leaps and may even represent a paradigm shift of sorts, but the core ideas remain untouched. It is here where a sort of continuity persists; as a depth grammar, superficially reformed and reconstituted but still very much rooted in the ideas which propelled the series in its earliest years.

But, as we all know, this constant reimagining has given way to such a tangled web of half-conceived connections and retroactive writings, that maybe it's the actual concept of *Doctor Who* continuity we need to redefine, rather than simply justify. Put another way, it's possible the obsession to furnish the programme with an unassailable linear narrative, has resulted in a search for meaning which has consumed itself; an ouroboros with no beginning and no end. (Shades of Andrew Smith's Starliner passengers and their endless procedure, perhaps?) If we follow this kind of reasoning, what we're left with are thematic arrangements that comprise the series and which remain open to adjustment and revision; structures built out of 'data points' that are subsequently blended via a sort of 'group think' process — a far from an oblique reference to fandom.

Yet, however much continuity is forged and heralded as permanent, the way in which

absolute claims are made and then discarded (e.g. the number of regenerations available to a Time Lord) must surely point to the absurdity of holding onto this concept beyond a handful of overarching notions that represent identifiable plot features (e.g. time travel, good versus evil, regeneration).

To prove this point, we need only look at two instances, one historic and the other recent, both of which illustrate the illusory nature of the beast.

First up, Season Seven and its UNIT motif. If you watch just about any adventure from 1963/4 and then skip to 1970 you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a different show altogether. Gone is the mysterious and sometimes malevolent time traveller and his granddaughter: in their place a Holmesian scientist channelling Professor Quartermass, complete with Cambridge-trained lab assistant, advising a military outfit on all things extraterrestrial. Fast forward to 1977. The UNIT backdrop has vanished and the Doctor's journeys in the Tardis are once again *de rigueur*. It's as if the whole earthbound association never happened.

Second, the placing of romance in the Doctor's travels. While there may have been a strong chemistry between some earlier incarnations of the Doctor and his female companions (e.g. Jo Grant, Sarah Jane Smith, Romana) in the post-2005 series this



becomes overt love interest, most notably with Rose Tyler, and to varying degrees with Martha Jones, Amy Pond, and Clara Oswald. Even so, during the first two seasons of the

Doctor's female regeneration, this aspect gets abandoned entirely in favour of a travelling dynamic closer to the original first Doctor line-up. From *Revolution of the Daleks* onward, we see the revived format continued, as the departures of Graham and Ryan result in a Tardis crew more in the Troughton/Hines/Watling/Padbury mould. And although it's true Yaz has developed feelings towards the Doctor, they still remain largely unreciprocated, meaning that a recent continuity thread, the romantic story element, has been, if not erased from history, then certainly remodelled.

Where do these examples leave continuity? In a word, confused. After all, how can one maintain a coherent succession of events where the above cases are concerned? As already mentioned, it's as though the components are being invented as the show progresses. Thus, any attempt to weave a rational through-line between otherwise incongruent narrative structures is surely all sleight of hand?

It may well be a case in which our psychology predisposes us to invoke the continuity of *Doctor Who* whenever we think of it, as with Descartes' 'conceivability argument': or perhaps, like Kuhn, to conclude that specific sequences of events represent storytelling paradigms (Season Seven might fit here)

which are then discarded to make way for a new, or revised approach. Alternatively, it's perfectly possible to frame the issue as a sequence of loosely connected narrative nodes, providing a sort of infrastructure that allows for a Theseus' Ship of changing identities within the broader understanding of *Doctor Who*. However, regardless of the position, or positions, you care to take, the search for logical connection remains something of a will-o'-the-wisp, a phantom quest which traps us inevitably in an endless loop of recurring myths and lore, each as insubstantial and ephemeral as the one before it.

We look for meaning in our lives by telling stories. We weave past events into a coherent present, and project forwards in time using the same logic. This is our autobiography. Our continuity. But in fictional accounts, biography is at the beck and call of capricious imagination, so continuity becomes illusory; a deceptive hall of mirrors, where our conceptions of time and sequence, cause and effect, have no place. An impossible tale to tell, if you will.

As the Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard wrote, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." For "life" read *Doctor Who*.

SPACE MOUNTAIN AND OTHER CONVENTIONS

By Paul Bensilum

In 1987, I was driving home from a mini-event I had organised with fellow fan Alan Disdale (*Doctorcon 2*: a lovely meeting held in a church hall, guesting Richard Franklin and John Scott Martin) complaining about the costs involved in attending larger gatherings. "Why," we grouched, "were they never held at sunny Clacton-on-Sea?"

Our answer — as it is to so many of life's problems — was to stop moaning and arrange something ourselves.

Result? Five annual conventions.

The first two were very much about finding our feet. Both were held at the University of Essex — *Doctorcon 88* in 1988 (obviously) and *Zygcon 26* in 1989. (See what we did with the numbering there? — Well we thought it was clever!)

And although Colchester is 13 miles from Clacton-on-Sea, at least it was a start!

The centrepiece of *Doctorcon 88* was John Levene showing an unofficial premiere of *Wartime* (the first ten minutes only, as he claimed the producer/director, Keith

Barnfather, would murder him if he played it all.)



When one of the attendees commented that the University of Essex resembled Paradise Towers, it sparked what was to become a loose theme for *Zygcon 26*, and we invited writer Stephen Wyatt to attend. He donated a Kang crossbow for our auction, while *Doctor Who* artist Alister Pearson wrote a Great Architect sketch which had Stephen and the others in kittens.

Meanwhile, Ian Reddington, fresh from his appearance in *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*, posed for hundreds of pictures throughout the day, recreating his Chief Clown smile and wave every single time. A special achievement.

The success of these events convinced us it was time to go big. We took a year off to plan, booked the Shepperton Moat House Hotel from 23 to 24 November 1991, and created our first *Space Mountain*, taking the name from the recently released *Doctor Who* Target novelisation of *The Nightmare Fair*. Alister Pearson had designed the Space Mountain font that appeared on the cover and gave us permission to copy it for our publicity material.

The Nightmare Fair, of course, was set in Blackpool, and our new venue was 74 miles from Clacton-on-Sea, but you can't have everything!

Further, into our planning, it became

obvious we would need a catchphrase if our convention was to stand out in a crowded market. As I sat and pondered, rejecting all the obvious ones ("Feels different this time...", "Change my dear...", "This is not Clacton!") I happened to glance up at my Paddington Bear on his shelf and I noticed the Wellington boots. Although the bear came from Darkest Peru, an estimated six thousand miles from Clacton, we do share the same initials, so I went for it! *Remember your Red Wellies!* would become our slogan.



Deborah Watling, on the other hand, lived a mere two miles away from me and attended a local *Who* group BBQ at Alan Disdale's. Having got to know us all, she remarked, "This event in October, would you like me to bring my Dad?" We were hardly going to say, "No." I will never forget the look of shock and respect on Jon Pertwee's face when he walked into our green room and saw accomplished television and film actor Jack Watling sitting there.



This was Jack's baptism on the convention circuit and, like so many others, he was blown away by the fans' reaction and asked "Can I come next year?"



Then, Alan Stevens (who seems to be going as strong as ever) agreed to conduct the

guest interviews. I cannot personally affirm how well he performed, as I never had time to see a single panel. However, the response we got from both guests and attendees was extremely positive, which is why we invited him back!

We had decided to include lots of games, basing them around stories like *The Celestial Toymaker*, *The Mind Robber* and *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*, etc., as well as the BBC series *The Adventure Game*. Saturday Game Night was to become a regular feature of *Space Mountain*.

Our very first involved a competition between all the guests. It was won by Nicholas Courtney, who, for a glass of brandy, managed to stuff three dry cream crackers into his mouth and eat them quicker than the others.

FIVE RED WELLIES RAPID !



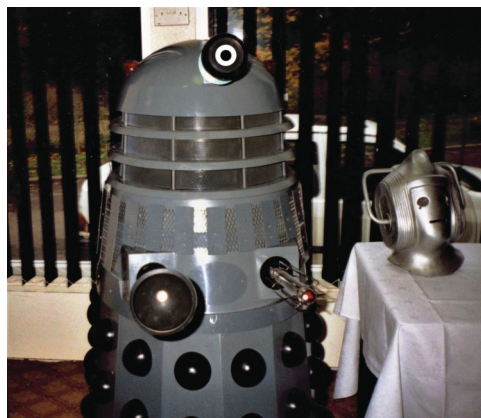
So far everything had proceeded smoothly, but then, inevitably, we ran into one or two hiccups.

The superbly talented and generous Derek Handley had allowed us to use his wealth of *Doctor Who* monsters and costumes at all our events and the many smaller gatherings we organised. Equally, we were also glad to welcome Alistair Lock and Dave Brian who brought their respective Daleks "Salvador" and "Norman".

Cue the First Hiccup.

- A waitress is on her way to the Green Room with a tray of drinks.
- A Dalek and a Cyberman walk out of the Green Room.
- (You can probably guess where this is going.)
- The waitress turns a corner to see the monsters approaching her.
- The waitress shrieks.
- The Dalek shouts: "Exterminate."
- The waitress screams.
- Tray, glasses, and drink inundate the corridor (up to, and including, the ceiling).
- The waitress runs for her life.

Luckily she did not sue.



Other hiccups included:

The guest who checked out with two hotel pillows in their bag.

The guest who telephoned on Christmas Day to complain their appearance fee had arrived late.

That's conventions for you.

Due to poor health, Alan Disdale had to take a back seat for *Space Mountain II — Remember Your Red Wellies Too* (23 to the 25 October 1992) so local group members Nigel Turner, Carl Berriman, Simon Norfolk, Mike Foster, and Sonya Gray stepped up to help.



Right from the start, things seemed to fall into place.

Firstly, as we were lining up the Shepperton Moat House again, Tendring District Council approached me to ask whether I would be prepared to host our event locally. The only condition for their support (including broking discounts) was for it to be held in October. Unsurprisingly, I agreed.

At last, my dreams of staging a convention in Clacton-on-Sea were manifest!



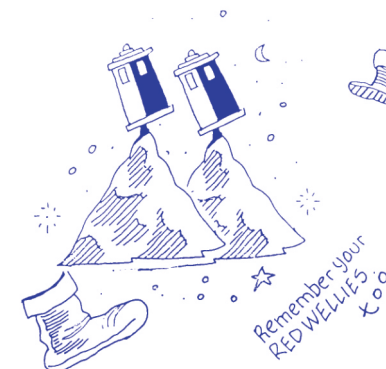
Then Deborah Watling confirmed she would love to attend and asked if she could bring her Dad again. "Err, yes please."

Finally, a local charity contacted us to say they had two full-sized Daleks which had been built for a carnival float, and as they were no longer needed, would we like them? The result — a stonking raffle — Win a Dalek for £1.

SPACE MOUNTAIN II

FRI 23 : SAT 24 : SUN 25 OCTOBER 1992

THE PRINCES THEATRE : CLACTON-ON-SEA



IN AID OF THE RAINFOREST ACTION FUND

CONVENTION HOTLINE : 0255 426509

7pm - 8pm : ask for Paul

We kicked off things with a social in the bar on the Friday night, beginning with Gary Dowie, who recreated his *Silver Nemesis* VHS extra moment of "Let's Make Magic."

The star of Saturday Game Night was Gary Russell. He was a fantastic Gamesmaster keeping everyone interested and building up the tension as the competitors battled through challenges until just two remained. The final involved a head-to-head Trilogic Game. In an incredible atmosphere, attendee Tim Robinson was the first to complete his set, winning the Red Welly of Rassilon for his efforts.



This had been a great three days. However, our next convention, Space Mountain III — The Final Fling (22 to 24 October 1993), although again held in Clacton, was destined to be our last. Alan Dinsdale had sadly, passed away earlier in the year and my heart was no longer engaged, but I still had to make sure everything was up to previous standards, so my girlfriend Sonya and I buckled down to the task of organising things.

During *Space Mountain II*, forward planning had led us to the realisation our third outing could actually involve real time travel (think about the dates!) and so we incorporated this theme into our marketing.

On the Friday night, we held a successful mini-quiz to win the Foot of Omega (another red welly). The final involved a penalty shootout between the two teams, as they were tasked with naming all the *Doctor Who* stories in reverse order, starting from *Survival*. *Warriors' Gate* was where it was lost. The winners were captained by none other than Alan Stevens, who still has the welly today; I mean Omega's foot.



The Red Welly of Rassilon was also up for grabs, and the runner-up from the previous year, known as 'Tintin', clinched victory.

Deborah brought her Dad again and whispered to me how much Jack had been looking forward to it. "He wants to return to the world of *Doctor Who*. Remember, if/when he does, *Space Mountain* put him up to it." *Downtime*, starring Jack Watling as Professor Travers, was released a couple of years later.

New to us was guest Cy Town, and just like John Scott Martin all those years before, he proved to be one of the most interesting. Dalek operators have worked with many of the Doctors and are often overlooked, so they hear and see everything.



Finally, I had been asked by Alan Dinsdale's father to auction off his son's *Doctor Who* and sci-fi collection, meaning that, bittersweetly, we had one of the best merchandise auctions ever. He also gave me all of Alan's *Doctor Who* BBC VHS tapes, and I vowed to keep the collection up-to-date and preserve them; a promise I faithfully honoured.

Whilst I had convinced myself *Space Mountain III* would be my last, local group members and many of the previous attendees began asking for another, and I was persuaded to discuss hosting *Space Mountain IV — The Encore*. It would, I agreed, be a good way to launch our radio play, *Idle Hands*, starring Peter Miles, Richard Franklin, Gary Russell, Dicky Howett, and featuring Headless Monks long before they debuted on *Doctor Who*.



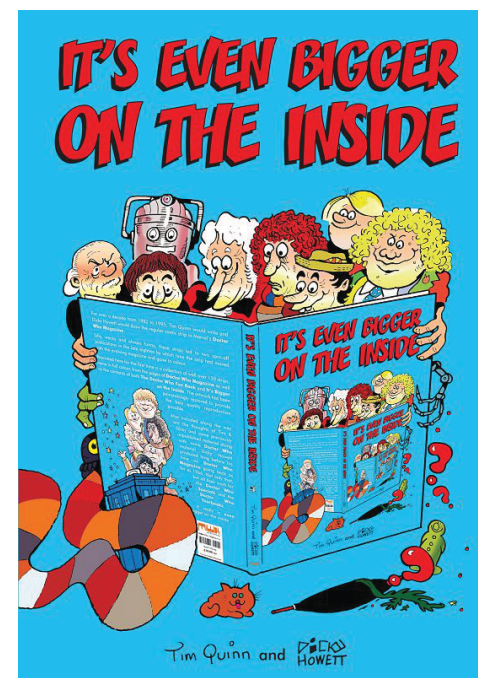
However it was never to be, and a few hundred copies of the recorded play, complete with music and sound design by Eddie MacDonald of the rock group *The Alarm*, remain boxed up in my parents' attic... a lost story.

It is now almost three decades since the last *Space Mountain* and yet memories and echoes still abound:

- Alister Pearson putting my initials into

his cover art for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* paperback.

- Leaving my job as an analytical chemist in 1995, and becoming a national event organiser for the Liberal Democrats, purely based on my experience of master-minding *Doctor Who* conventions.
- Returning from the Far East in 2005 to live in the UK and having a successful job interview, during which it transpired the Managing Director had attended my events.
- 2015 and the *Space Mountain* cartoons of Dicky Howett feature in the publication *It's Even Bigger on the Inside*.



- A text popping up on my Facebook messenger from Stephen Wyatt to say how he still remembers our conventions with affection.
- A comment in a *Doctor Who* Facebook thread appearing in 2021, with

@PaulBensilum Remember your Red Wellies.

We released a VHS of *Doctorcon 88*, but not for the following events, though the old, unedited tapes remain. Perhaps one day I will take them down from the dusty shelf... And watch the panels I never saw live.

My grateful thanks to all our guests who entered so wholeheartedly into the fun and spirit of these conventions (massive apologies if I have forgotten anyone). They were:

Alistair Lock, Alister Pearson, Alan Stevens, Barry Letts, Colin Howard, Cy Town, David Banks, Dave Brian, Derek Handley, Dicky Howett, Deborah Watling, Gary Dowie, Gary Russell, Graeme Smith, Ian Reddington, Jack Watling, John Freeman, John Leeson, John Levene, John Nathan-Turner, John Scott Martin, Jon Pertwee, Laurence Payne, Michael Wisher, Nicholas Courtney, Paul Cornell, Peter Halliday, Peter Miles, Pete Wallbank, Richard Franklin, Sheelagh Wells, Sophie Aldred, Terrance Dicks and also Richard Briers, who, unable to make the dates, instead came to a local charity fête.

.Remember — Always Remember Your Red Wellies!



THE WITCH'S FAMILIAR? CATS IN DOCTOR WHO

By Fiona Moore, supervised by Ayesha the Tortie

In 2021, there were 12 million cats in the UK — which is roughly one cat for every five humans. Given their obvious popularity, it's not surprising a fair number of *Doctor Who* stories have featured them. What's even more interesting is that these cats are frequently (though not inevitably) associated with strong, independent women, good or bad: witches, either literally or figuratively.

The earliest cat to appear in the series is one of the exceptions: a tortoiseshell, providing the first-episode cliffhanger to *Planet of the Giants* (1964). In this case, the tortie isn't a symbol of the occult, but an allusion to one of the key sources for the adventure: the 1957 film *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Like the Richard Matheson novel on which it's based, this features the titular protagonist confronting a pet moggie, and you can see why the *Doctor Who* production team wanted to reference the incident. Not only is it an iconic scene, but it's also a nice riff on our ambivalent relationship with cats' predatory side: we love them and they love us back, but we can't deny they're efficient little assassins. Dispatching anything mouse-sized with no qualms at all.



Doctor Who doesn't achieve 'Giant Cat' as well as the film. The movie's director and editor make theirs appropriately scary by filming it on set over a long period and

choosing clips where its apparent mood fitted the requirements of the scene. Conversely, the *Doctor Who* version looks much too happy and relaxed to be properly menacing. But then, they were working with a quicker turnaround and on a smaller scale, so it can be forgiven.

There are other cats in the programme not specifically associated with witch-figures. Generally, they're included for a moment of drama, like the one nearly mistaken for a Dalek mutant in *Resurrection of the Daleks*, or for characterisation, such as the feline the Doctor talks to in *The Empty Child* (admittedly a story featuring a woman with a secret, but not a particularly mystical one). While it's intriguing to speculate on what we might have seen in the unproduced Season 15 six-parter *Killers of the Dark* (occasionally, and inaccurately, known as *The Killer Cats of Geng Singh*) it must remain a footnote in the history of the show. There is little we can confirm other than it would have featured the humanoid Cat People of Gallifrey, and included a set-piece where they fill a stadium.

Generally, felines are there to stimulate drama, like the one nearly mistaken for a Dalek mutant in *Resurrection of the Daleks*, or for characterisation, such as the mouser the Doctor talks to in *The Empty Child* (admittedly a story featuring a woman with a secret, but not a particularly mystical one).

Other cats seem to be used more thematically, and their connection with witches arguably begins with *The Dæmons*, where, along with a rat and a toad, a cat (tortoiseshell again!) briefly appears in the atmospheric montage at the beginning of the adventure. This is a tale about the preternatural, albeit with a science fiction gloss, so showing animals that are legendarily supposed to be the familiars of witches sets up the idea right from the start. Interestingly, however, the witch here is Miss

Hawthorne, one of the story's heroes, meaning the affiliation is not always represented as a negative one.



A throwaway line in *The Mark of the Rani* explaining why the Rani was banished from Gallifrey — she created genetically engineered mice which ate the Lord President's cat — resumes this pairing. Leaving aside any jokes about how cats are obviously from Gallifrey (they're magical, have multiple lives, and cross space and time in an instant) the Rani is another forceful woman who can be read as a sorceress: she is able to disguise herself as an old crone, is a scientific genius, and manipulates both animals and humans. Therefore, out of all the possible, amusingly macabre, genetic engineering mishaps that could have led to her banishment, strikingly, it is one involving a feline.

In the following adventure, *The Two Doctors*, the Sixth Doctor spots a cat on the streets of Seville, and thinks about eating it; a sign the Second Doctor's metamorphosis into an



Androgum is altering his successor's biology. The Sixth Doctor's own love of these creatures is reflected in his choice of lapel badges, so making him contemplate scoffing one is extra horrific. Furthermore, since this story also features a strange, compelling woman in Chessene, the augmented Androgum, the cat doesn't just point up the Doctor's uncanny transformation but associates it indirectly with a witch figure.

In addition, *Survival*, the quintessential twentieth century *Doctor Who* cat story, also foregrounds potent females. It introduces us to the black kitlings, teleporting from one world to another, while Ace is befriended by Kara, one of the Cheetah People, and starts to transform into one herself. If we consider Ace's development as a woman to be the main focus of the adventure, this appears to symbolise the ambivalence of mystic feminine power: will it be used for good, or for evil?



In the revived series, Russell T Davies picks up (perhaps unconsciously) on this symbolism. His 'cat people' are the Sisters of Plenitude of *New Earth*, a sinister order of nuns who experiment on human subjects; an amalgamation, both spiritual and medical, of cats with women in positions of authority, this time using their powers for bad.

These hybrids proved sufficiently charismatic to be brought back in *Gridlock*, where we meet a male cat-person, his absolutely delightful brood of half-human kittens, and, briefly, a female who may be in a same-sex



threesome with two humans. Primarily, however, *Gridlock* is the redemption story of Novice Hame from *New Earth*, returning here as a positive figure; a good 'witch' rather than a bad one.

There is also the brief presence of a cat in *Fear Her*. It's only a cameo (it turns up to be trapped in a drawing) but it is in a tale about a child, Chloe Webber, with seemingly magical powers. During the Moffat era, the cat the Eleventh Doctor talks to in *The Lodger* (according to what he tells Amy) provides him with "psychic help" in the complex, potentially metaphysical task of uncovering a stranded alien ship disguised as an upstairs flat. Then later, in *The Big Bang*, as the Doctor's timestream rewinds, he sees Amy running over to the aforementioned cat and stroking it. So the female and feline are intertwined once more.

Further, in a notable detail, the two appearances of lionlike beings, during *The Woman Who Lived* and *Warriors' Gate* sees them operating alongside powerful, supernatural women: the deathless Ashildr working with Leandro in the former adventure; and Romana deciding to leave the Doctor to help the Tharils in the latter.

As we can see, there's a frequent, though not universal, parabolic connection made in *Doctor Who* between cats and women who have abilities which are, or seem to be other-worldly. Significantly, this doesn't signpost how they will be used. Like cats themselves, they are morally neutral, and will become antagonist or supporter as the narrative requires. The arrival of a cat does, however, flag up to the audience they should watch out for such women. Good or bad, they're going to be important.

What do you think of our new look?

Based on comments from our readers we've chosen a new, lighter, colour format.

Let us know via the email on the contacts page.

