TIDES OF TIME

Oxford's unique Doctor Who and cult television magazine. Published by the Oxford University Doctor Who Society.
"OH MY GOD, THEY KILLED <INSERT RELEVANT NAME>!" (David Bickley)

YOU BASTARDS! (David Bickley)

A survivor’s guide to being a Doctor Who minor character.

LAWFUL WEDDED WIFE (Alice Dryden)

Jo Jones, née Grant, discovers married life is just another alien world.

DROP THE DEAD NIMON! (Fiona Moore)

What if the more radical New Adventures writers had got their grubby little mitts on the shooting scripts to some televised stories?

THE MILLENNIUM TRAP (Alan Whitten)

‘Warlike people from the past have been appearing around London,’ said the Colonel, ‘At the moment, there’s no explanation for it.’

PASS NOTES: THE MISSING ADVENTURES (Alastair Harrison and David Bickley)

Which makes a better Doctor Who book: a Hartnell historical or a Pertwee action romp? Tides investigates. Take heed, budding novelists!

NAMELESS (David Bickley)

One of the best things ever to appear in Tides, this is a story with character, invention, and poignancy by the bucketload.

LOOKALIKES

LIVING TOGETHER (Alastair Harrison)

Musings on the subtext of Terry Nation’s great 70s shows: Survivors and Blake’s 7.

POLICE-BOXY BLUES (John Wilson)

An ex-President dares to think the unthinkable.

LEGOLAND (Alastair Harrison, from an idea by Matthew Peacock)

Some non-Who fiction for Tides! A megalomaniac with a toy fetish is holding the country to ransom. There’s only one dynamic duo who can help, and they don’t wear tights.

“THIS PLACE — THEY’LL LET ANYONE IN” (Fiona Moore)

Everything you ever wanted to know about the intertextuality of Britain’s leading gay drama and Queer as Folk.

WORK IN PROGRESS (David Bickley)

So you wanna write for Tides? Learn from the mistakes of the old hands...

EDITORIAL: THE RETURN OF JO GRANT (Alastair Harrison)

It’s 1973, and Jo Grant has gone for good. But in 1999, she’s back with a vengeance. Why?

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In true Tides of Time tradition, you’ll find two editorial sections in this issue. The real one is at the back of the magazine, where you’ll find me mouthing off about the concept of 90s fandom as applied to 70s icon, Jo Grant. But this is the important one, the one where I get to thank everyone who wrote for the issue.

It’s a slightly shorter magazine than has been published lately, but I hope you’ll agree that the content is really packed in for maximum value. Interestingly, the fiction content of the ‘zine is growing by the issue— the creative juices are obviously being stimulated by something in college cafeterias!

This has been my first and last issue as editor and I’d like to apologise to anyone who felt caught out by the change in editorial policy between Tides 23 and 24. I’ve rejected more than one story from this issue (but see pp.19-22 for an entirely fictional account of that process) only to give pride of place to some of my own ramblings. This is a reflection of my ideas, not the quality of the rejections.

Anyway, go on, you’ve got a whole magazine to read. I’d like to take this opportunity to wish the society and all its members—past, present and future (?)—good fortune.

Best wishes,

AL
“Oh my God, they killed <insert relevant name>!”
“You bastards!”

Doctor Who just wouldn’t be the same without Death running amok. The stories in which no one dies can be counted on the fingers of one hand while those in which practically everyone falls off their perches can be remembered with ease (take a bow Pyramids of Mars, Horror of Fang Rock, Caves of Androzani & company).

From Old Mother and Kai in An Unearthly Child to the wife of Bruce the ambulance driver in the TV Movie, the Doctor’s path has been littered with corpse piled upon corpse. The Doctor has died in effect seven times over (and several more times than that if you include The Curse of Fatal Death), six companions have perished on TV (of which three, unlike Pert, Grace and Chang Lee, had the decency to stay dead) while many more companions have had cause to meet their makers in the books. Indeed the blurb for Lawrence Miles’ forthcoming Interference novels suggests that the tally may soon be increased...

But I don’t want to talk about publicity hogs like Katarina, Sara Kingdom or Adric, nor the Doctor (whose tendency to regenerate at moments of crisis is frankly cheating); I want to talk about those innocent characters who have the misfortune to wander into a story in which the Doctor appears and whose destiny it is not to see the closing credits. Doctor Who is full of them, all of them presumably with lives of their own, with families to go home to and with stamp-collections to complete and yet, without regard to their dreams or pension schemes, the writers cast them into Hades without so much as a by-your-leave.

Obviously this has to stop. And so, to this end, Tides of Time is proud to present the twelve attributes vital for the long-term survival of anyone thinking of becoming a minor character in a Doctor Who story.

1. Heartlessness To start with the obvious, do not fall in love with the Doctor’s companion unless you’re absolutely positively sure she (or he, you never know) is leaving the show in the same story. Even then, we don’t advise it. True love is great, yes, but saving your skin is far more important.

2. Timing (i) Take huge care at the end of an episode: stay close to the Doctor and/or a place of safety, no matter how tempting the inducement to wander into an poorly lit, monster-infested corridor may appear.

3. Timing (ii) Even more care should be taken if you appear in the opening minutes of the story, especially if the Doctor and his companions haven’t arrived yet. There’s nothing a weird alien threat from beyond space enjoys more than zapping an extra in the first few minutes just to demonstrate its supreme power.

4. Credulity: believe the Doctor instantly when he claims that there’s terrible danger threatening the Earth or wherever, and never, never attempt to prove him wrong. Don’t try inspecting infected power cells, jumping into particle accelerators, investigating weird cults or anything equally daft.

5. Teamwork Likeable characters live in grave, grave peril - killing them off is such a neat way to crank up dramatic tension. If you find yourself getting dangerously charismatic, link up with another character in the show and form a loveable double act with them. Nuclear missiles would bounce off Lilofoot & Jago or Garron & Unstoffe, I tell you.

6. Rectitude Do not be tempted to become an evil underling, however good the character may be or however appealing the salary. The main enemy may survive if the production crew have an eye for a sequel but you'll hit the dust no matter what. If an all time great like Nyder can be killed, so too can you.

7. Caution If a mysterious alien race offers you enormous power with no strings attached, don’t—even bother looking for the strings – just run.

8. Self-centredness No heroic self-sacrifices, if you please. Let someone else close those electrified doors, become Keeper of Traken, blow up that Dalek spaceship or whatever. Let the Doctor do it, if it’s so bloody important.

9. Indifference Do not prod your fingers into anything green and glowing. It won’t enjoy it and neither will you.

10. Sociability Try not to find yourself in a small isolated base in the Antarctic, in space, on the moon or wherever with just a handful of other characters for company. The chance to whittle down the cast one by one is usually more tempting than a writer can resist.

11. Impatience Reasoning with the main enemy of a story is never a good idea: they tend to be tetchy and are not natural democrats. Try to kill them or run away, preferably the latter.

12. Sheardlessness Last and most important: do not be played by Michael Sheard under any circumstances. The obvious kudos to be won is more than out-weighed by the near-certainty of your impending demise. Think of Lawrence Scarman, Lowe, Mergrave and the Headmaster and stay well clear.

David Bickley
Lawful Wedded Wife

It was a month since Jo had had a proper bath, a decent meal or a fresh pair of knickers. The appeal of hacking through virgin Amazon jungle in search of foodstuffs that could ease the world hunger crisis was beginning to pall — as was the appeal of her brand-new husband.

At first it had been fun. The smell of understanding from the registrar in Cardiff when they'd told him they had to be married straight away. The night flight to South America, holding hands as moonlit clouds drifted beneath the plane. Purchasing equipment — how they'd laughed at each other's pith helmets, simultaneously breaking into 'Mad Dogs And Englishmen'! And that first night alone in the tent, strange insects pattering on the canvas outside, when she had said, 'Some couples go to Niagara Falls for their honeymoon, you know? I'll give you Niagara Falls, young lady!' Cliff had grooved, pouncing...

Now, four weeks into married life and removed from civilisation, the phrase 'Some couples go to Niagara Falls...,' repeated whenever she slipped in the ever-present greenish mud or a tarantula dropped into the evening pot of stew, had gone from tease to mild reproach. She was conscious, too, of missing the Doctor, especially as she knew she might never see him again. He was theoretically attached to UNIT, of course, but by the time they emerged from the jungle — provided Cliff didn't decide to stay here and start a health farm to teach the natives about roughage he could be anywhere in space or time. As she composed jokey postcards to him in her head, she couldn't help an occasional treacherous wish for the blue police-box to appear, wheezing and incongruous, on the bank of the turgid river and whisk her away.

It was strange that she should miss the Doctor, as his worst traits seemed to be represented by Cliff. She was sick of trailing behind him as he checked his compass and cut a path, of getting left behind by his long legs, of making amusing noises when he lectured on flora and fauna. His field of knowledge was certainly vast, but she still resented what he took to be a patronising tone. It was all very well kow-towing as Assistant Scientific Adviser, but as lawful wedded wife she found her old position of straight man hard to bear. Cliff seemed to enjoy playing Jungle Boy, chopping at stray vines with the machete and burrowing among tree-roots in search of edible fungus. Certainly after the first few days they hadn't needed to rely on their rations of biscuit and soya protein, but the stews of mushrooms, berries and bark, however nourishing, tasted peculiar at best and indescribable at worst.

There's no point feeding the world's population if they won't touch the stuff with a barge-pole,' Jo pointed out at dinner.

'If you'd wanted to bring a spice rack you should have said so,' replied her husband. She was ready to snap back, but laughed dutifully instead. Oh hooray, corny jokes — yet another way in which he resembled the Doctor.

Jo lay awake that night, too hot and sweaty to sleep. She had moved her camp bed next to the tent-flap to combat the claustrophobic stuffiness, but it was just as bad outside. Although unexplained noises from the jungle still startled her she had given up disturbing Cliff, who would pat her reassuringly and identify the sound as a spider-monkey or macaw. She tried to shut them out by humming to herself and fixing her eyes on the phosphorescent blue glow coming from the front pocket of her rucksack — the Doctor's wedding present. He had spoken of its soothing influence, but it didn't seem to be having much effect on her marriage. When, apparent ages later, she felt a draught on the back of her neck, she turned over to take advantage of it and confronted a large spotted animal standing half inside the tent. Its compact body and powerful, huge-pawed front legs filled the flap, while its eyes caught what light there was and reflected dull green. Jo didn't need Cliff's help to identify a jaguar.

Her first instinct was to scream and scream again. You screamed at the terror — the Dalek, the Drash — and the Doctor made it all right. But the Doctor wasn't here, and when she risked turning to look at Cliff she saw he was awake but frozen, not even breathing. Then the jaguar's back legs came in, and Jo could see its tail twitching angrily as it glared at her, mouth slightly open.

'Nice pussy,' she whispered ridiculously. 'Good cat.' It was obviously deciding whether or not to spring, shuffling its forefeet with their wicked claws. An idea came to Jo and she reached slowly, silently for her pack. As her arm stretched out and the big cat's gaze tracked it she saw herself facing all the old dangers again, Autons and dinosaurs and maggots-oh-my, and each time screaming, screaming. She blushed in the darkness. The buzz of the zip opening made the jaguar narrow its eyes and crouch, but after half a second's frantic fumbling the Metebelis crystal was in her hand and she held it confidently in front of the animal's muzzle. The green glare shifted from her face to the stone, and the pupils narrowed like a cat's in the sun. Gradually the beat of the tail slowed and stopped. The jaguar blinked in a puzzled manner and began to step daintily backwards until its nose disappeared through the triangular gap. Jo only heard a few padded footfalls before the sound was lost in the other nocturnal rustlings.
The Doctor would have said something like ‘Well done, Jo! You handled that big puszcat pretty well!’ Cliff, on the other hand, leaped over still mummified in his sleeping bag and wrapped trembling arms around her.

‘My God, Jo!’ he said, ‘I thought if I moved it would go for you. I couldn’t do a thing.’

‘It’s all right now, it’s gone,’ she said kindly, savouring her chance to be the reassuring, resourceful one.

‘You know, when I first met you I thought you were a loveable, fluffy little thing who needed a big strong man to protect her. How wrong I was,’ he grinned, ‘You’re a real Amazon!’ This time her laugh was genuine and delighted.

The next morning they emerged into an open clearing for the first time. It was glorious to see the sky unhindered by creepers and massive trees. They followed the river path, able to walk side by side for once. Once a tapir lumbered out of the jungle, regarded them with shock for a moment, then turned tail. A sound of rushing water increased gradually, making Jo think longingly of clear springs – the muddy river water, boiled and purified with chlorine tablets, had been her only way of maintaining fluid levels since the beginning of the adventure. Then they rounded a turn in the path and found themselves at the top of a dizzying waterfall. A hazy rainbow was formed by the droplets thrown into the air, while continuous thunder accompanied the rolling water which foamed white as it crashed at the bottom. Cliff took her hand and pointed.

‘There,’ he said, ‘Niagara Falls!’

Alice Dryden

DROP THE DEAD NIMON!

Ah, Doctor Who. What would it be without loads of poignant introspection, Green Party propaganda, gratuitous sex and violence... wait a minute... I think I’ll go back to the usual fare! Now, in ‘Planet of the Daleks’ we have a few important points to consider. First, the Daleks are back! Yay! Second, the Doctor is back! Yay! Third, the Earth is back! Yay! Fourth, the future is back! Yay! And finally, the past is back! Yay! So, let’s get started.

NIMON! (aka The Horns of Nimon)

He knew that, beyond this, there was nothing he could do to save his doomed world. ‘Weakening scum!’ he cried out, impassioned; how could he tell these Anethans that without them, the sun would never rise over the blue hills of Skonos, that Skonan children would nevermore romp beneath their black-robed parent’s indulgent eyes, that thousands would nevermore thrill to the sight of Soldeed in ceremonial costume? ‘Weakening scum!’ he murmured, almost tenderly [cut to moment of gratuitous sadism]!

ST PAUL’S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS (aka Robot)

...It stirred into life, moving almost gracelessly to knock over a Nissan hat. What was its name? It didn’t know. It had vague recollections of a grey-haired being, much smaller than it, who had spoken to it in peculiarly soothing Benvor. Beyond that, all had was a vague desire to play with Action Men and the gradually forming conviction that the being in the blue frock was considerably more interesting than the ones in the green trousers...

AUTONS: TERROR (aka Terror of the Autons)

... ‘Hello, Captain Yates’, Benton said as he fetched Jo Grant a cup of tea, just to prove what a truly evolved, non-sexist New Man he was. ‘Back from your Gay and Lesbian Officers in Interracial Relationships Support Group meeting so early?’...

THE 3.14156 DOCTORS (aka The Chase)

As Barbara ran down the corridor, she reflected with a peculiar pang that, in this time, all the crew of the Marie Celeste were dead, and all the tourists on the Empire State Building were dead, and the Beatles were dead, and all the Aridians were dead, and all her old colleagues at Coal Hill School were dead, and Jimmy Hoffa was dead, and Marley was dead, and there was absolutely nothing she could do about it. What was it all for, this running up and down corridors, sacrificing a new cardigan every week, not to mention doing her ankles in? Everybody always wound up dead...

PLANET OF THE DALEKS (aka Planet of the Daleks)

... ‘This is a jungle? It looks more like a cheap BBC backlot’, said Jo in an incredibly post-modern and knowing way, ‘And why have we got wobbly blue lines around us?’

‘Ah, that’s an atmospheric effect,’ said the Doctor in a way that suggested familiarity with fan-in-jokes, and was also incredibly post-modern into the bargain. ‘Aren’t you going to ask why this planet doesn’t look like a quarry, or make some remark about how all these corridors look the same to you?’

‘No, but I was going to suggest that we hurry if we want to get back in time to watch the adventures of Professor X at five-thirty,’ Jo said, walking off in an incredibly post-modern (and knicker-revealing) way.

‘Oh, that’s all right,’ said the Doctor, catching up. ‘I’ve got them all on video in the TARDIS. Well, some of them are missing, and a few are only available in black and white, but I’m sure if I look I’ll find some colour footage in the back corridors.’

Their stock of arch, incredibly post-modern in-jokes exhausted (except the one where the incidental characters turn out to be thinly-disguised versions of contemporary political figures or else the author’s mates, and they were sure that one wouldn’t be long coming), they trudged along in silence...

PANTS (aka The Power of Kroll)

...The k’zndm of the Frei’goy tribe gazed out over the khaki waters of the swamp. Once, he thought, this had all been a beautiful wilderness, lush, green and full of birds, large animals and flowers, and had been populated by a genteel people, who roamed the swamplands, hunting, gathering, smoking weed, worshipping the Goddess reading Lloyds’ List and engaging in transcendental group sex, and who really understood the ways of nature. Now all they had left was the sacred rite, and these outsiders wanted to take that away from them too. How could he make them understand the pleasure of leaping up and down while shouting ‘Kroll!’ at three-second intervals?...

WET DREAM (aka The Underwater Menace)

...But what, Polly reflected, if what they were doing was wrong? What right did they have to go about destroying all these alien civilisations just to save Earth’s? Even if they had really bad fashion sense? Was it true that nothing in the world could stop Zaroff now? What had the Doctor meant by saying that Ben was better suited than Jamie to guard a desperate man? Wasn’t it weird how the Doctor could sometimes seem so frivolous and yet at other times so omniscient? What time was lunch? Why hadn’t she noticed that, while she was sitting around thinking, Zaroff had run off with a manic look in his eye?...

ZARBI! (aka The Web Planet)

...Hrastor leaped forward, scattering blood and guts and bits of Zarbi all over the landscape like a Jackson Pollock painting...

Fiona “sensitive and new-age” Moore
Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart, one-time head of the British section of UNIT, the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce, sat in the garden of his country home, recalling his past: his blood and thunder days with UNIT, his marriage to Doris and his brief days at Brendon school. Although two years had passed since Doris had walked out on him, the Brigadier couldn’t help but smile.

‘Oh, Doctor, Doctor. Those were the days—days when alien beings would come at us from all angles.’

It had been a long time since he had seen the Doctor and he wondered how the old chaps—old chaps—were getting on.

Inside that space/time craft, the TARDIS, two people stood next to the many-sided control console. One was the mysterious traveller in time and space known only as the Doctor, who was now in his eighth incarnation. He had longish, wavy hair and keen, alert eyes. The other was his travelling companion, Samantha Jones. She was thin and wiry with short, cropped fair hair and blue eyes.

‘Doctor,’ said Sam, ‘That business with Estronablas…’

‘Yes, Sam, what about it?’

‘I just wondered if he was still around?’

‘Oh, yes, he’ll still be around somewhere,’ said the Doctor, ‘But as for the Gorvoroks, I think we’ve seen the last of them.’ He returned his attention to the console, and began flicking switches and pressing buttons.

All at once lights started flashing. The Doctor stared intently at them. ‘Oh no!’ he said.

‘What is it? What’s wrong?’ asked Sam.

‘Some outside influence is taking over the TARDIS,’ said the Doctor.

‘The Gorvoroks?’ asked Sam.

‘As I’ve already told you, Sam, it’s highly unlikely that they’re still around.’

‘Then who, or what, is behind it all?’ By now, Sam was getting worried.

‘It could be the Daleks, Cybermen, Sontarans—or even the Rutans come to that!’

The Brigadier was woken by the phone. He mumbled to himself as he forced himself up from his chair. He picked up the receiver, ‘Lethbridge-Stewart.’

‘Ah, Alistair,’ said the voice on the other end. It was the head of Geneva.

‘What is it now?’ said the Brigadier. ‘Can’t a man enjoy his retirement without being bothered by some bureaucratic oafs.’

‘We’ve got problems, Alistair, and you’re just the person to deal with them,’ said John Stanley, the head of Geneva.

The Brigadier let out a sigh. ‘What is it now?’

John Stanley paused for a moment and finally said, ‘News from the past have been sighted all over London.’

‘Why don’t you get hold of an exorcist?’ said the Brigadier. ‘I’m afraid it’s much more serious than that’, said John Stanley.

It would be, thought the Brigadier. ‘OK, I’ll get over to UNIT HQ and assist Brigadier Bambera with the problem.’

‘Well, actually Alistair, UNIT is now under the command of Colonel Drayton.’

‘Good chap he is?’ asked the Brigadier.

‘He is in fact a she.’

The Doctor and Sam arrived outside UNIT headquarters. A burly-looking soldier walked up to the gate. ‘Can I be of assistance?’ he asked.

The Doctor replied, ‘We’d like to see the Brigadier, please.’

‘It’s Colonel now, Colonel Drayton,’ said Sergeant Gray.

‘Oh, yes, of course,’ said the Doctor. ‘The last time I saw her will be in that business with the Rigellons.’

Inside a dimly-lit control room, a group of tall figures stood round the control desk. They were the Rutans.
"OUR OPERATIONS PROCEED ACCORDING TO PLAN, COMMANDER," said Lieutenant Roff.

"THAT IS GOOD," said Commander Gorm. "SOON THE WARLIKE HUMANS WILL ASSIST US TO END THE WAR WITH THE SONTARANS."

Colonel Sarah Elizabeth Drayton looked up from her paperwork when there was a knock on the door. 'Enter,' she said. The door opened and Sergeant Gray entered with the Doctor and Sam. "Sergeant Gray, who are these people?" At that moment, the Brigadier arrived.

"It's OK, Sergeant," said the Brigadier. Drayton was speechless for a moment, and finally said, 'Would someone mind telling me what's going on?'

'It's like this, Colonel, I've been asked by Geneva to assist you with your problem,' said the Brigadier.

At this point the Doctor became alert, 'What problem is this?'

'Who are these people anyway?' asked the Colonel.

'Allow me to introduce myself... ourselves... us,' said the Doctor. 'I am the Doctor, and this is my companion, Sam Jones.'

'The Doctor,' said Drayton, 'UNIT's former scientific adviser?'

'The one and the same. Now, what is your problem?'

'Warlike people from the past have been appearing around London,' said the Colonel, 'At the moment, there's no explanation for it.'

'All mysteries have explanations, Colonel,' said the Doctor, 'you just have to look for them.'

General Sycorax studied his instruments and then turned to Lieutenant Vysaarto. 'The Rutans have used their time transference unit again.'

'Shall I send troops to hunt down the Rutans?'

'Yes.'

The Doctor, Sam and the Brigadier sat down in front of the Colonel's desk. The Doctor chose his words carefully and said, 'So, Colonel, when did all this start?'

'Two weeks ago,' said the Colonel, 'First of all two alien ships arrived on this planet, then all of a sudden ghosts from the past began appearing around London. First came Oliver Cromwell, then Robespierre, followed by Napoleon—and then Hitler.'

'I see,' said the Doctor. 'Doctor,' said the Brigadier, 'Who or what could be doing this, and why?'

'Well, let's find out, shall we?' said the Doctor. 'What do you suggest?' asked the Colonel.

'The two spaceships, Colonel, hold the key to the mystery, so let's visit them first.'

A couple of Rutan troopers were out in London looking for ghosts from the past. And in no time at all, they found them.

'Where are we?' said Hitler.

'And how did we get here?' asked Robespierre.

'OUR LEADER WILL EXPLAIN,' said the first Rutan trooper.

A UNIT jeep pulled up on the Embankment and out came the Colonel, the Doctor, Sam and the Brigadier. The Doctor took one look at the ship and said, 'Ah, yes, a Sontaran battle craft. Your mystery, Colonel, is solved.'

'Of course it is,' said the Colonel, not sounding convinced. 'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'The Sontarans are behind all this.'

He walked forwards and disappeared inside the Sontaran ship. General Sycorax looked up as the Doctor entered. 'Ah, Doctor, we meet again,' he said.

'Yes, we do,' said the Doctor. 'Now, why are you bringing warlike people of the past into the present day?'

'We are not doing it, Doctor,' said Sycorax, 'The Rutans are.'

'In a bid to end the war, no doubt,' said the Doctor.

'Yes, Doctor. Will you help us to stop them?'

'Can I trust you?'

'You have no choice, Time Lord,' said Sycorax.

'OK,' said the Doctor, 'So where are the Rutans now?'

'Our sensors have detected them not far from here.'

After a long while, the Doctor and the Sontarans emerged from the ship.

'Doctor, what's going on?' asked Sam.

'Later,' said the Doctor. He turned to face Drayton. 'Colonel, we must get to Trafalgar on the double. It's the Rutans behind your problem.'

The UNIT jeep pulled up at Trafalgar Square, and the Doctor, the Colonel, Sam, the Brigadier and the Sontarans got out. The Rutans looked up and saw the Sontarans advancing towards them.

'DESTROY THEM!' roared the Rutans.

Hitler and the rest rushed forwards. There was a blinding flash and then they were gone. The Sontarans aimed their weapons and fired, and Rutan troopers dropped to the floor one by one. The Rutan commander aimed his weapon and fired: the Sontarans fell to the ground. Just as the Rutans had got to their ship, a grenade thrown by the Colonel struck the hull, and the cruiser exploded.

Sycorax picked himself up from the floor. 'Thank you, Doctor. We shall return to Sontaran high command.'

Later, back at the TARDIS, the Colonel shook the Doctor's hand. 'Goodbye and thank you, Doctor,' she said.

'Yes, thank you Doctor,' said the Brigadier.

Inside the TARDIS, Sam turned to the Doctor and said, 'Where to now, Doc?'

'Do you really expect me to know that?'

'No, I suppose not!'

Alan Whitten
Pass Notes: The Missing Adventures

A look at what works and what doesn’t

So who’s in it? The first Doctor.
Who writes this stuff? Lots of writers, from the traditionalist Christopher Bullis to the avant-garde Daniel O’Mahoney. Steve Lyons has specialised in the period of 60s Who to great effect. Perhaps the attraction is that it’s an opportunity to rewrite and tidy up an era in which the story was always more important than the continuity, because there wasn’t any continuity.

What’s so good about it? The earliest form of Doctor Who, with David Whitaker as script editor, was a little more literary than some of its successors, e.g. in its use of pure historicals. To some extent this was a budget and technology consideration: talk was cheap. What this means, though, is that the style of the age converts to prose very well. It was more about people talking to each other and less about huge explosions, and generally speaking the novelists have favoured a plain style which allows character and issues to come to the fore, without going to the extremes of internal narrative seen in some of the more experimental New Adventures. There was also plenty of variety of subject and style in the 60s between S-F and historical, comedy and morality play. It’s a fairly safe bet that there’ll be a monster in a Tom story: it’s not so certain in a Hartnell.

Highs The Witch Hunters for tragedy; The Sorcerer’s Apprentice for adventure.
Lows The Man in the Velvet Mask is too strange to be satisfying.

But what else is there? The second Doctor, for starters.
You’d have to be brave... You’re not the only one who thinks so: for years there were fewer MAs featuring the second Doctor than any other. Having burned their fingers on him, few writers seem keen to turn back. (Steve Lyons will become the first to do so later this year.)

What’s so difficult, then? On screen, Troughton is expected to carry an episode. He was the centre of attention in a way that Hartnell rarely was: certainly not towards the end when he was increasingly ill. Troughton’s style erred more towards an (admittedly eccentric) naturalism where Hartnell’s could be described in terms of physical and verbal mannerisms. The second Doctor’s character was carried not only in his lines, but also his face, his voice, his bearing and his silences.

This is rather difficult to capture in prose. Justin Richards has a go in Dreams of Empire by expanding the “sandwich” routine from The Web of Fear 1. It’s rare for this sort of imitation to gain a life of its own, however.

Highs The Roundheads has its fans; The Dark Path starts well, but has a poor conclusion.
Lows Twilight of the Gods; Invasion of the Cat-People.

Who’s that tall geezer? The third Doctor.
Action by Havoc, eh? Well, quite. David A. McIntee loves the early 70s action style. Paul Leonard has had a couple of cracks at coupling Barry Letts-style mysticism with stream-of-consciousness writing.

Does it work? It’s tricky to pull off an action sequence. What works as an exciting piece of action-based television is almost necessarily lost in prose. Sometimes it can work, and you can be swept up by the experience of reading an episode of Doctor Who. At the risk of sounding slight, this was the skill Terrance Dicks had to perfection in his novelisations of Pertwee stories.

One of the best modern evocations of this era was in a book that wasn’t really a Pertwee story, Who Killed Kennedy. This was supposedly the memoirs of a journalist who had investigated not only the Kennedy assassination but also such familiar Pertwee-era threats as the Autons, the Keller Machine and the Master.

Highs The Eye of the Giant for fun; The Face of the Enemy for action.
Lows Catastrophe (sorry, Terrance); The Ghosts of N-Space.

Who’s that tall geezer? The fourth Doctor.
Who writes this stuff? John Peel, David McIntee, Jim Mortimore, Chris Boucher...
Hey, aren’t you forgetting? Shut up. We’ll get to him later.
Ooooh, handbag! Sorry, but there’s a time and a place for everything. Finding it in the Tom Baker era is difficult, though. Tom’s years cover a range of styles, which are encapsulated and developed in many different books. Justin Richards drags Tom into a 90s Bond film, for instance, in System Shock and more recently Millennium Shock. More excitingly, from the point of view of reading a Doctor Who book rather than “watching” an episode unfold on the page, Stephen Marley extends the themes of Philip Hinchcliffe horror into a literary framework in Managra.

Then there are those who get under the skins of characters, and in the last couple of years, Leela has benefited from this treatment. Jim Mortimore’s Eye of Heaven could be described as a Leela MA guest-starring the fourth Doctor.

Highs Managra; Eye of Heaven.
Lows Evolution; Last Man Running has good Leela bits, but the plot is a non-starter.

Who’s that man with Tom? Gareth Roberts.
What’s he doing here? Roberts’s fourth Doctor and Romana stories are in a class of their own.
Convince me... They’re about style. Revelling gloriously in the style of Graham Williams and Douglas Adams, Roberts is interested in a world of high concepts and good humour, with tea and biscuits to follow. Never mind the story—it’s probably been done dozens of times before with some variations—enjoy the humour, feel the relationships between the regular cast perfectly captured on paper, and prepare to be dazzled by some of the most gloriously camp supporting characters in the history of Doctor Who.

It’s that simple? Well, no. As with the period of Doctor Who it tries to evoke, there’s an underlying nastiness beneath the good-humoured camp horror. Roberts’s last full-length Doctor Who book, The Well-Mannered War, was received ambivalently on the basis that the sheer unpleasantness which had made Jasper such a pain to read seemed to be threatening to get out of control. It’s an interesting—and rather worrying—point: implicit in some of the most fun Doctor Who ever written is some of the most
unpleasant material in Doctor Who. Check out the recent short story 'Return of the Spiders', in More Short Trips, for a blast of pure Gareth.

Highs The Romance of Crime; The English Way of Death; The Well-Mannered War.

Lows The Well-Mannered War.

OK, so who's next? The fifth Doctor, naturally enough (there's method in my madness, you know). Who'd want to write about him? Paul Cornell says that Davison was the Doctor he always used when writing fanfic. When the MAs were launched, it was the Cornell/fifth Doctor combo which started it all (admittedly as a ploy to let Gareth Roberts make a fourth Doctor pitch un molested). Since then it's been a bit of a mixed bag: there aren't any specialists in the way that Roberts specialised in the fourth Doctor.

Not surprising, is it? I mean, isn't the fifth rather bland? No, no, no! That's what people say when they haven't seen a Davison episode in a while and are just thinking of him as that nice chap from All Creatures Great and Small. Watch The Awakening for a sarcastic fifth Doctor more snappish than Ally McBeal. See Planet of Fire for a moment of sheer power and authority, '...our friendship is at an end!'

This doesn't seem to have come over all that well in prose, however, which is a little surprising. There ought to be elements of his character which can be brought out and emphasised in a novel better than in twenty-five minutes of television, but the means of doing this are elusive. Lance Parkin had a clever scheme when he compared the methods of the fifth and seventh Doctors in Cold Fusion, but that was a one-shot idea.

Highs The Sands of Time; Cold Fusion; Al likes The Crystal Bucephalas.

Lows Lords of the Storm; The Ultimate Treasure.

Oh, no, it's... The sixth Doctor.

Wasn't two seasons enough of that coat? Not for Steve Lyons, Dave Stone, Christopher Bullis, David McIntee, Terrance Dicks...

Odd company for Terrance, isn't it? Which just shows how versatile the sixth Doctor can be. One minute he's in a surreal romp with Dave Stone (look, don't think about it, all right?) the next he's in a classic adventure with Uncle Terrance.

Terrance's latest, Players, could be a textbook on how to write for the sixth Doctor. Keep the arrogance, but leave it with affection. Keep the name-dropping, but tie it into the plot. The Doctor and Peri can argue, but in indirect speech. It's interesting that Terrance takes the Doctor out of costume for large parts of the book, and places him in an undercover rôle, investigating strange goings-on involving Winston Churchill. It's the sort of thing the big T has always been very good at, but late-80s Doctor Who was awfully bad at (The Mark of the Rani, anyone?). The result is a chance to rewrite Doctor Who's history: what if Colin had been in a really good historical adventure? Would he have been taken more seriously in a different costume? And so on.

Highs Millennial Rites; Players.

Lows Burning Heart; Mission Impractical.

Finished? Let's go for tea. Not so fast. There's plenty left to talk about. It's difficult to take account of what works and what doesn't for the seventh Doctor since he's appeared in over sixty books, and there were very distinct and independent movements of writing style and characterisation in them. Arguably, by the end of the Virgin series, the seventh Doctor had very little to do with the character on television. More recently, though, with a change in publisher and reduced to one-seventh of a series, he's reverted to something like the television version.

How the mighty are fallen. Oh, I wouldn't go that far. The Virgin NAs were at great depth of insight into the character, and effectively reshaped him in their own image, but there's been something fresh about the more recent seventh Doctor books, which have tended to be big, fun adventure stories, especially by the Robert Perry and Mike Tucker writing team. The danger is that by 'part four' they'll feel the need to write an all-action conclusion (like in part four of a TV serial) which simply will not work on the page.

Highs The Room with No Doors for character; Human Nature for character-by-omission; anything by Perry and Tucker for action.

Lows The middle period of Virgin's range transformed the Doctor into a manipulative figure who thought he had to sacrifice his scruples to the greater good. Interesting, but overdone.

And that brings us up to date. Indeed. The McGann range of books is still producing one per month, but for the most part they seem curiously insipid, probably because there's only been a little over an hour of McGann-as-Doctor on screen. There's not much for anyone to get their teeth into there. On the other hand, Sherlock Holmes was created on the page without any kind of TV original, and the seventh Doctor of the Virgin books broadened far beyond what we'd seen on television. It's difficult to shake the feeling, though, that anything that could be done has been done years ago, and that all that lies is to retread old ground.

A little harsh, perhaps? Yes, I'm sorry, it's just that it's all too easy to feel that there's nothing left to do. This isn't quite the case (viz. The Infinity Doctors), and in any case it depends on what you think Doctor Who books are there to do: to be Doctor Who by taking the concepts and developing them—even to the point of being unrecognisable; or to recreate the atmosphere of the TV series. Perhaps the point of having two concurrent series of books is to do both. Without much in the way of visuals and screen character to anchor it, though, the eighth Doctor series is in danger of drifting.

Oh, I don't know. There's plenty of good eighth Doctor stuff out there. There was that Alien Bodies book for starters. That was one book, which has been held in reverence but not successfully emulated or surpassed. But yes, there is good stuff out there. Alien Bodies and The Infinity Doctors play different ideas of Doctor Who off one another, while The Scarlet Empress is a strange and challenging wander through mystical and popular culture, paying homage to The Hobbit, Arabian Nights, Doctor Who, Ice Cold in Alex...

Highs Alien Bodies; The Scarlet Empress gains in style what it loses in plot.

Lows The Janus Conjunction; Vanderverden's Children.

Do say Multilayered examination of the semantics of Doctor Who. Don't say When's the film coming out?

Alastair Harrison and David Bickley
Nameless

5 April, 1973

He was born in the late afternoon. He had nine thousand, four hundred and eighty-two days of his life left to live.

It had been a difficult pregnancy, his mother later told him: he had been a breech baby, his feet and not his head insisting on coming out first, and hence he had been very difficult to deliver. Few doctors were skilled enough to deliver a child in these circumstances without employing Caesarean section and that his mother had refused utterly: she had very specialised religious views. She also refused to consider an abortion which complicated matters still further.

*He hated this story. His own mother would have let him die. He hated this story.*

The lengthy and insoluble arguments which had erupted between his mother, the hospital and the local magistrates' court were all cut short when his mother had suddenly started suffering contractions a good month before the baby was theoretically due. All the doctors in the hospital had been nervous of delivering the child: if they tried by the normal method they were sure that that the baby, and probably the mother as well, would die. If they did use Caesarean section, however, they knew that there would be all hell to pay legally - it would probably mean the end of their careers.

*Why did his mother tell him this story? He hated this story. She would have let him die.*

Just as one doctor had reluctantly volunteered to try to deliver the child without using Caesarean section, a young man with fair hair and a bright open smile had walked into the operating theatre. He was a temporary member of staff, apparently, one with excellent references, credentials and experience, for all his youth. He announced with calm determination that he would be the one to deliver the baby, much to the relief of all the other doctors, especially the one who had volunteered a moment or so before.

The delivery was astonishing: the young man worked carefully and professionally, somehow convincing his mother to take anaesthetics after all (another thing she had objected to) and within two hours the baby was born. He was healthy, a little smaller than was the norm, and very obligingly he had burst into tears as soon as he entered this world.

"He's beautiful," his mother cooed, once the child was placed in her arms. "I shouldn't have risked it... he's so beautiful."

*And was this supposed to make him feel better? He hated this story.*

It was almost a miracle, but perhaps that wasn't the oddest part: before dashing off once again, departing as abruptly as he had arrived, the young doctor had asked his mother a simple question — What was the baby going to be called?

His mother had been too exhausted to answer but a nurse had chipped in and told the young man the name which his mother had decided on. On hearing it the young man had clasped the nurse's hands in almost feverish excitement and announced to all and sundry that a great weight had been taken off his mind. Then, releasing the bemused nurse, he had crossed over to his mother's side and extended a finger to the tiny bawling bundle that lay in her arms.

"I'm so very sorry," the young man had said, and then left. His mother never learned the identity of the stranger who had saved her child's life had been - he had apparently left his job at the hospital the very next day. And all he had wanted to know was the baby's name...

*She would have let him die. He hated this story. He hated his name.*

11 June, 1979

He was six years old. He had seven thousand, two hundred and twenty-six days of his life left to live.

The blone on the other side of the table was a nutter — that was plain enough. He had ridiculous bulging eyes, ludicrously curly brown hair and a toothy grin that was frankly disturbing. He looked a bit like Rasputin minus the beard in fact. Still at least he looked the part - he was supposed to be the best fortune-teller his mother had ever heard of. In the few days since he had arrived with the rest of the circus all his mum's cronies had had their fortunes read and everything had happened as he had predicted.

His mum had forced him to go along with her to see this marvellous fortune-teller. She loved this sort of thing: it appealed to what she called her "spiritual side." And so now he and his mother were sitting opposite this man in his rather gaudy circus tent, the exotic nature of which was rather spoiled by the presence of a blue police box lurking in the corner. It seemed oddly out of place.

*I am il Dottore Misterioso,* he boomed, rather impressively. "I know how the stars move. I know all the paths of destiny and I see the future of all who come to my booth. I have studied among the Ancients and I use the charts and readings of the greatest seers among the Greeks."

For a deeply creduulous woman, his mother was never very keen on sales pitch. "What system do you use then?" she asked sharply.

The fortune-teller flashed her the desperate grin used by charlatans the world over when encountering an expert in their pretended field.

"I need the date of birth of the individual in question and the precise time when he or she was born," he announced. "I need also the precise location of their birth and, above all, I require the name he or she was given first in this world — it is that first naming which carries the most power." As he spoke his voice regained its former confidence and by the end of his little speech it resounded around the tent even more strikingly than before.

His mother nodded slowly. "I know that system," she said vaguely, "but you don't need to know the person's name. That's rubbish."

"I assure you, it is hugely important ..."

"No, it isn't," his mother insisted, "and if you carry on like that we'll take our custom elsewhere."
The fortune-teller wisely refrained from pointing out that he was in fact the only fortune-teller at the circus. “So be it,” he boomed. “Tell me all the other details and we can begin.”

After his mother grudgingly told the man her date and place of birth, the fortune-teller rummaged for a couple of minutes among the papers and charts that lay strewn on the table, peering at them and ostentatiously making mental calculations. It was a good performance and his mother was, against her will, a little mollified.

“I can see into the future only one week,” said II Dottore Miserioso eventually. “And I see your future all too plainly.”

“What will happen?”

The fortune-teller looked a little embarrassed. “Nothing very interesting.”

“Oh come on!”

II Dottore shrugged. “The stars foretell that you will go shopping on Tuesday and Friday and that on the Friday shop you’ll forget to buy some biscuits. I told you it wouldn’t be very interesting.”

His mother was fuming. “You can do better than that! Will I meet a tall handsome stranger at least?”

“No.”

“Oh. Well then, will Anne and me win the bingo on Thursday?”

“No.”

“Honestly!” said his mother. “You’re useless.”

“And now,” the fortune-teller said hastily, before she could walk out in disgust, “I will tell the future of your son.”

“Well it had better be more interesting than mine.” She tugged at the boy’s sleeve. “Come on, tell him what he wants to know.”

The boy stood there, staring at the strange man with the bulging eyes, and said nothing.

“Oh honestly!” his mother said in exasperation. “He was born on the Fifth of April 1973 at half past four in the afternoon and a right bugger he was to deliver. Nearly killed me, he did. And I had him over at St. Thomas’s.”

“The hospital on the other side of town?” the fortune-teller queried.

“Yes, yes,” said his mother irritably. “Now if you could get on with it?”

The man paused before diving into his charts again. “I really do need to know his name,” he pleaded.

“Oh no you don’t,” his mother said flatly.

The fortune-teller shrugged and once again went through a flurry of checking and re-checking charts although with a good deal less enthusiasm this time. After only a minute he came to a stop and looked at the boy straight in the eye.

“He will probably win a Maths prize at school on Wednesday,” he finally declared.

The boy’s mother perked up a little at this. “That’s wonderful,” she said, hugging her son to her. He scowled and tried to pull away.

“Then again he might not,” the fortune-teller added under his breath. “But wait!” he cried, to recapture his client’s attention. “There’s more! With this child I can see even further into the future –”

“You see – you didn’t need his name at all.”

“– if he stays away from computers he will lead a long and happy life. This I predict.”

“If he stays away from what?” repeated the boy’s mother incredulously. “Honestly, I’ve met some crooks in my time but you’re the worst of all. I’ve a mind to take my money back.”

She stood up abruptly and marched out of the tent, dragging her son behind her and not giving the fortune-teller enough time to remind her that she hadn’t actually got round to giving him any money in the first place.

The boy remembered the fortune-teller’s advice about computers. He ignored it, though: after all, the man had been as mad as a brush. Apparently he had gone missing from the circus the very next day.

18 February, 1997

He was twenty-three years old. He had seven hundred and sixty four days of his life left to live.

He pushed away the computer keyboard in despair and held his head in his hands. His plans were in ruins... everything he had fought for and struggled for so long was lost to him... It was the thirty-seventh time he had lost at Quake that day.

“Sorry, old chap,” came the cheery and deeply annoying voice of his opponent from the other side of another computer linked up to his. “But you left yourself very open there.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” he snapped. “Look, can we call a halt for today?”

“Naturally, naturally – let’s have a go at Worms instead. We’ll see if your luck changes with that.”

“No,” he said hurriedly. “I don’t want to play any more computer games today.”

His opponent emerged from behind the computer on which he had been playing. On first impressions he had
seemed quite old – his hair was almost pure white – but he displayed a continual vigour and energy that belied his years. After all, how many men older than forty took quite such an active interest in computers, and games in particular?

"A sad thing for the owner and manager of an internet café to say," his opponent murmured.

"You’re just too good for me."

The other man rubbed his chin thoughtfully – it was a curious mannerism of his. "I’m sorry," he said, "I just love gadgets and I’ve spent far too long recently in a place where there wasn’t anything like this." He swept his arm around in a broad gesture that encompassed the whole of the office and the computers within it, as well as the café beyond.

"You’re more than making up for it now. Coffee?"

"Oh yes, thank you."

While he was making the coffee, he kept a careful eye on his erstwhile opponent. He had been a regular customer at Café Oudeis for about a month or so now. Indeed he had been so regular, and so generous in the amount of time he had spent at the establishment, that he had become a friend of the manager and had been invited on a few occasions into his office to play computer games against the manager himself. He was good company, despite his annoying tendency to win at practically everything even when all the odds were stacked against him.

Nevertheless the white-haired man made him uneasy. He got the impression that he was watching him, keeping an eye on everything he did. He even suspected that he was asking questions about him among the other customers at the café.

He wouldn’t have liked that sort of behaviour at the best of times: he was a very private person. Now, however, things were more sensitive than usual: he had, the other day, received an offer of a job from a rather secretive organisation that desperately wanted his services and which was prepared to pay him handsomely. It was also an organisation suspected of adopting a somewhat nonchalant attitude towards certain aspects of the law but such was its power that no one had ever been eager to challenge it.

Despite this, however, he was mightily tempted to take up the job offer – the café had been losing money lately and, if he was honest, the thought of being involved in an organisation that had real power appealed to him rather more than he liked...

"Actually," the white-haired man commented airily, "I’m rather glad we’ve stopped for the time being. I wanted to ask you a few questions about yourself."

Ah! Perhaps he was investigating him after all? "Really?" he commented blandly, while lowering his hand casually onto an alarm button set into one of the desks. The café was located in a rough area and the police had insisted that all businesses be wired up to the station in case officers needed to be sent out to deal with an emergency. He now regretted having set the device only so that the police would be alerted without the café’s own alarms going off – it would have been nice to scare this man off.

"Oh yes," the white-haired man said. "I heard you were thinking of changing jobs soon and I wanted to have a chat with you before you left."

Right, that was it! He stabbed the button to send a silent warning to the police. That would get rid of this interfering busybody – if someone had in fact employed him to investigate his affairs then he could have fun sorting it out at the police station. He glanced at the clock on the office wall. The police would take about fifteen minutes to get here. All he had to do was keep this man entertained for that length of time and then the police would get him and he’d be out of his hair.

"What do you want to know?" he said, trying to keep his voice calm.

"Oh anything," the other man said cheerfully. "Anything at all."

And so, half-babbling, he set about narrating the twisted sequence of events and miseries that had brought him to where he was now – sole ownership of a none too flourishing internet café. He talked about his father, who had died before he had born... he talked about his mother whom he had hated and whom had been obsessed with bizarre religions and beliefs, dragging him to see every fortune teller in town... he talked about the grotty industrial town where he had grown up... he talked about his second girlfriend, the one he had really loved and who had dumped him for no reason in favour of his best friend... he talked about the unhappy year he had spent at university studying computer science before being kicked out for failing his exams... he talked about the large sum of money which his mother had unexpectedly left him in her will and which had served as the capital on which he had set up his business... he talked about anything that came into his mind and astonished himself with his own honesty. And all the time the white-haired man just sat there and listened with rapt attention.

"And now I’ve got a job offer from these people," he said proudly, waving the letter the organisation had sent to him and keeping an ear open for the sound of approaching sirens.

The white-haired man took the letter from him and winced when he saw the name of the company, "I wish you wouldn’t get involved with them," he said unhappily. "They’re not a very nice crowd."

"Well that’s none of your business," he said, rather rudely. "There! In the distance he had heard a siren! The police were here!

The white-haired man stared at him intently for a moment and then shrugged. "I suppose not," he said, "One more thing – what’s your real name? I know it’s not Mr Oudeis as you say on your flyers: that just means ‘Mr no one’ in Ancient Greek."

"I keep my name to myself," he answered steadily. "I’ve never liked it very much."

"Come on man! Don’t be awkward. We’re friends, aren’t we?"

"No, I don’t think we are." The sirens had become much louder and he was sure he could hear the sound of cars drawing up outside. "I’ve called the police," he said triumphantly. "I don’t like people snooping around my business."

The white-haired man scowled and briefly glanced in the direction from which the sirens were blaring. At once the
other man saw his chance and leapt at him, determined to capture him before the police burst in.

The white-haired man must have seen him out of the corner of his eye. Shouting “Hai!” and lashing out a hand, he somehow smashed the other man to the floor. His victim lay there, gaping, unable to move. He was sure the white-haired man hadn’t even touched him.

“Venusian karate, old man,” his attacker said apologetically. “You’ll recover in about five minutes but you won’t be able to say anything until then. I’m sorry about that, but you really aren’t making things easy for me.”

Then, without looking back, he opened up the office window that looked out onto a back alley and disappeared through it with astonishing agility. The police never caught him.

Naturally he ignored the white-haired man’s advice. He sent a letter to the organisation accepting their offer the very next day. He was on his way to better things.

22 March, 1999

He was twenty-five years old. He had two days of his life left to live.

He was almost shivering with excitement. The plan was about to begin! His Boss had promised him that by the end of the week not just Great Britain but the world would be at their feet, so long as his mysterious allies were as impressive as they had been rumoured to be. And he would be one of the men who received the greatest rewards, the Boss had said: after all, without his contacts over the internet they would never have been able to acquire the hardware necessary to keep those idiots at UNIT in the dark for so long. Yes, he mused, life was finally going his way.

A disturbance in the corridor outside shook him from his self-satisfied daydream. Two of the Boss’s paid thugs burst into his office, half-dragging, half-carrying a strange little man between them. They came to a halt in front of his desk.

“This guy’s been asking questions about you,” said one of the thugs. “We thought you might be interested.” The other thug, a young man whose face wasn’t immediately familiar, nodded but said nothing.

“What kind of questions?”

The thug screwed up his face as he tried to remember.

“About before you joined the organisation. Your old internet café thing, old passwords and code names - that sort of thing.”

“All perfectly innocent questions,” said the little man, with a faint hint of smugness. He was an odd looking character this, with his bizarre, scruffy, baggy clothes and his untidy hair which frankly suited the Sixties far better than it did the late Nineties.

“I’m sorry if I arrived at a bad time,” he continued glumly, wringing his hands. “My transport’s a little unreliable. I meant to arrive at a more appropriate moment but once I was here, in the neighbourhood you might say, I thought I should come and have a look. I’m nothing to worry about, I assure you. Besides, if I were a spy, would I really come dressed like this?”

This was a good point. Unfortunately the little man then went on to spoil his argument by adding airily. “And I can assure you I know nothing about your Project at all.” His eyes widened and he did an almost comical double-take. “Oh my word! I shouldn’t have said that, should I?”

The man behind the desk leaned forwards. “What do you know about the Project?” he snapped.

The little man looked exasperated. “Nothing! I told you!” he said, a little petulantly. “Now, as I’m here, if I could ask you a few questions...?”

The man behind the desk pressed a button on his intercom. “Boss,” he said, speaking into a microphone. “I’m sending someone up to see you - an intruder. He knows rather more about the plan than he ought to.”

It was at that point that the second thug, the one he didn’t recognise, suddenly released the little man and, almost in the same motion, knocked the first thug unconscious. “Come on, Doctor,” he said in a thick Scottish accent. “We’ve got to go!”

The little man was looking rather sadly at the crumpled body of the thug. “Now was that really necessary, Jamie?” he asked.

The Scot gestured towards the man behind the desk. “Yon Sassenach’s raised the alarm. It’s not safe any more.”

“I suppose,” the little man said ruefully. He turned to the man behind the desk, who was sitting there, his mouth wide open, speechlessly watching this little scene unfold. “I don’t suppose you could tell me your name could you? Your real name?”

“What?”

From outside the office a klaxon began to sound and in the distance came the unmistakable sound of running feet.

“Come on, Doctor!” hissed the Scot, pulling at the little man’s jacket.

The little man lingered a little longer. “You still have the chance to leave this organisation, you know,” he said, continuing to talk to the man behind the desk and ignoring his companion’s entreaties. “You could have an entirely different future.”

And with that he and his Scottish friend ran bell-mell out of the office and into the maze of corridors that lay beyond. Astonishingly they both managed to escape, despite the best efforts of the Boss and his men.

The little man’s advice was ignored, of course. Leave the Boss and his friends with the main event coming so soon? He’d have to be insane. Besides which, once the event was over, the Boss would be sure to track him down for his cowardice.

Best to stay with the Boss. He’d have power beyond dreaming before the week was out - a chance to get his own back on the world and everyone who’d ever hurt him. Best to stay.
He was dead.

The Boss and the others had escaped of course. So too had the “aliens” who had come to support the Boss’s plans. He had never known if they had really been from another world. Not that it mattered now. He’d been left behind by the others and had been trapped in the Boss’ base when the building had collapsed. He never stood a chance.

A white-haired old man stumbled through the debris, coughing vigorously and holding a handkerchief to his mouth to shield him from the dust. He stopped in horror when he saw the corpse and called to the soldiers who had followed him in.

“Over here! One of them didn’t get out, it seems.” The old man knelt down and in vain felt the neck of the body for a pulse. “Nothing to be done for the poor devil.”

One of the soldiers – the sergeant in fact – joined the old man beside the corpse and made a hasty search of the pockets. He found only a couple of biros, a few receipts and a sweet-wrapper. “Nothing to identify him. Typical,” the sergeant commented brusquely. He stood up and signalled to his men. “Right lads! Take this one away!”

The soldiers nodded grimly and carried the corpse away.

The sergeant turned to the old man. “You shouldn’t have rushed in like that: you can see it’s dangerous.”

The old man wasn’t listening. He was slowly shifting his gaze across the ruins of the building. “He was the only one killed, wasn’t he?” he asked.

The sergeant shrugged. “Possibly, sir.” He glanced uneasily to where his men were waiting for him. “I have to go now, but thank you, Doctor: we couldn’t have stopped them without you.”

The old man did not reply and the sergeant disappeared off through the dust. For a moment the old man stood there alone amid the wreckage thinking to himself, a tear creeping down his face. Then another, smaller figure suddenly appeared in his line of sight.

“Grandfather!” a girl’s voice cried.

“Susan!” the old man shouted angrily. “I told you to stay behind!”

The girl ran to her grandfather and hugged him tightly. “I was worried about you, with the building falling and everything…”

“Yes, yes child,” said the old man, deeply touched and yet embarrassed by this display of affection.

The girl looked up at his face and gasped. “What’s wrong, grandfather? I’ve never seen you so upset before.”

Feeling suddenly weary, the old man sat down on a half-dемolished wall. “The building wasn’t empty after all. One of them was still inside. Those army people carried his body away just now.”

The girl sat down beside her grandfather and hugged him again. “You weren’t to blame, grandfather. You didn’t know.”

“Perhaps, perhaps not.” He looked down into her eyes, those eyes which stared up at him with such conviction and trust. “I don’t know what lies they told you about me back home, child, but in all my time I have been responsible for the death of not one soul, however evil or worthless. Indeed I saved many who deserved death. But now…”

“Grandfather…” murmured the girl, trying to find some words of comfort and failing.

“A death is a terrible thing… terrible… and to have been its cause, albeit unintentionally….”

“You mustn’t blame yourself…”

The old man stood up resolutely. “We have to leave now, Susan, and get away from this time. It would be foolish to linger: those soldiers will start asking questions now this shameful business is over.”

The girl stood up and began to lead the way about of the rubble. At the edge of the debris, the old man looked back at the scene of devastation.

“I cannot change what has happened today,” he said slowly. “That man died and I never knew him. I will learn more about him: what steps led him to this place. I owe that to his memory, at least.” He smiled sadly. “I never even knew his name.”

David Bickley

Lookalikes

Dear Tides of Time,

Gillatt

Screaming Queen

While browsing in W. H. Smith’s, I couldn’t help but notice the uncanny similarity between the very charming editor of Doctor Who Magazine, Gary Gillatt, and the equally lovely (and incredibly camp) Alexander from C4 drama Queer as Folk. Coincidence, or something more sinister?

Colonel Muriel Clean (Mrs)
LIVING TOGETHER

Blake's 7 was the Dirty (half-)Dozen in space, but it was also the story of an attempted revolution, with Blake as Ché Guevara. At the same time as being an action-adventure series, B7 successfully examined the difference between freedom-fighter and terrorist, as Blake toppled over the edge towards the end of series two and Avon went the same way in series four. On a deeper level, though, B7 was about another revolution entirely: an entirely domestic one fought not with spacecraft and plasma bolts or guerrillas and machine guns, but with money and propaganda. Blake's 7 was about authority versus rebellion, and unity versus individuality.

The miners' strikes of the early seventies were over by the time B7 was first broadcast in January 1978, but the memory of the three-day week lingered, and Labour wasn't working. Where could the country go from here? One possibility would have been the decay and lawlessness of Terry Nation's previous series for the BBC, Survivors, in which a man-made plague wipes out over 99% of the world's population. In the chaos which follows, the only rule of law is the rule of the shotgun. Modern ideas of property and justice are replaced with a neo-feudalism crossed with Marxism, whereby a community is run according to the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number, with a strong leader as administrator of his own concept of justice (see E2: Genesis; E6: Garland's War). From one point of view, the plague is a science-fiction device which is used to illustrate the precariousness of modern society, and to provide the starting-point for a drama which week-by-week examines some of the various aspects and consequences of the fall of civilisation. On a loose allegorical level, however, the plague could be seen as the manifestation of corruption, uncertainty and lack of leadership in government, which leads to the breakdown of civilisation just as inevitably as does the plague. What we see of the origins of the plague in the title sequence show it to be a man-made virus. It is the end product of thousands of years of learning and industry. In Survivors, civilisation destroys itself after it has reached a certain peak, before which the means to do so did not exist. This needn't necessarily correlate to ideas about contemporary British politics, but it does indicate an underlying anxiety about how our civilisation works, and with what sorts of problems it is capable of coping.

The expression of this anxiety occurs in the isolation of characters from the infrastructure which has, up until now, informed their—and our—lives. In the absence of the established order, the choice seems to be between "our" survivors' commune and the authority of local warlords. The most important part of life after the plague is its communal nature; even the initially taciturn Greg Preston realises that the rebuilding of civilised life is going to require the survivors to live and work together. There still remains the question of just what type of community is required; however: one of harsh discipline, free love, or some kind of compromise between the two.

If Survivors offers a bleak projection of the future as one of breakdown and lawlessness, Blake's 7 offers an equally bleak vision of it as a totalitarian state where discipline and order are rigidly enforced by a military Federation of enormous power. 'From strength, as we say, to unity' remarks Servais, its greatest exponent. The background of B7, as revealed in particular by its first episode (set entirely on dystopian Earth), is of a power which demands absolute obedience to the rule of law from its subjects, and achieves that obedience by using pacifying drugs. In Survivors, the breakdown of civilisation is followed by the further breakdown of the remainder of the population into small groups, each with their own conflicting interests. B7's Federation has seen the potential of a similar breakdown and has decided that this must not happen: unity must be preserved at all costs. The price is loss of individual viewpoint in favour of the orthodox view: loss of freedom in favour of order.

This wasn't a new idea for Terry Nation. The Daleks, the city of Millenius (DW: The Keys of Marinus), the Federation and the System (B7: Redemption) are all fictional representations of fascism. They are all civilisations dominated by ideas of racial purity, strength through conquest and the absolute authority of law (as opposed to justice). Obviously the logic by which Davros claims the Daleks are a force for good in Genesis is flawed; when all other races in the universe have been enslaved or exterminated, then there will be a lasting peace. The fascist argument ignores the right to live for any but its own (an argument which is given an interesting twist by the Dalek civil war of Resurrection, Revelation and Remembrance). At the same time, however, there is a sense in which the Daleks, the Federation and the community of survivors really are trying to do the same thing: to unify their own people. The original set-up of the 'pepperpots' in The Daleks, if not Genesis, implies that their situation was very much like that of Survivors. The cataclysmic event on Skaro was war, not plague, but the effects were much the same, with the remaining inhabitants living in an isolated community, fearing those from outside. The difference between the survivors and the Daleks is in their ideology, not their aim. Survivors brings together a group of disparate people united by a common goal, while the Daleks have no such agenda. Daleks are already united by their very nature, and wish to destroy, not to unify, those unlike themselves, with the unintentional result that communities are united in their fear of and hatred for the Daleks themselves: this is the great good which comes out of their great evil. The right kind of unity is clearly beneficial.

Indeed, there is something rather more heroic about the attempts of the Survivors to get along with one another—to achieve unity—and to live through disease, famine and attack from outside, than there is in the reckless antics of the Doctor or the directed energies of Blake and the Liberator. There is a certain fragility to
everything the Doctor does. On the basis that even if he gets everything right, there is no guarantee that the planets he visits don’t fall into chaos and anarchy the moment he leaves. Similarly, as Blake realises, he has achieved little against the Federation in real terms. “Resistance needs a base”, and people to follow its movement, not a cartoon hero destroying communications bases here and there. What’s more, when Blake finally seems to be able to really hurt the Federation in the last episode of series two, by wiping out its nerve centre, Star One, he needs to recognise two things. First, that by destroying it, he will be responsible for the deaths of millions of people across the Federation without climate control or automated food deliveries by freighter, etc. In fact, he will be responsible for just the sort of anarchy triggered by the plague in Survivors. The really important struggle isn’t to destroy the old order, but to get along with people—perhaps even to work from within the old order (as Ven Glynd tries and fails to do in B7: Voice from the Past).

Near the end of Star One, Blake needs to transcend his own battle with the Federation to realise that in the greater war with the aggressive aliens from Andromeda, he is united with the Federation, and that Star One is too great a resource to throw away in the face of the intergalactic war, even at the cost of allowing the Federation to continue.

Does this (temporary) alliance with the Federation mean that Blake has sold out in some way? Or could it imply that the Federation was never the real enemy anyway: if the Federation is a fascist police state, what are the Andromedans? A more fascistic state with more intense ideas of racial purity? A comparison with the Andromedans challenges our ideas about the Federation. It may well be a totalitarian state, but unlike the civilisation of the Daleks or the Andromedans, it is not one which has completely lost its humanity. Despite their apparently individual nature (see Tides 22: Well that buggers up...), Daleks are more or less indistinguishable from one another. They may use personal pronouns in relation to themselves, and they may not have linked themselves to a central computer system, but as far as we at home are concerned, they are faceless and nameless. It doesn’t take much effort to see them as representing foot soldiers who can subsume their individual feelings and scruples to the uniform of the army or the party. Collective responsibility is no responsibility. Federation troopers, like Daleks, have no distinguishing marks. With the visors on their helmets down, it’s impossible to tell one from another. But time and time again in B7 we see the troopers remove their helmets and talk to one another. In Tidal, a former foot soldier describes what it was like to serve under Travis. In Rumours of Death, the guards in Servian’s palace engage in idle chit-chat. In Bounty, the squad leader is generally annoyed with the surveillance division, who can’t tell the difference between an intruder and a rabbit. We can never forget that in B7, unlike Doctor Who, the enemy is an organisation made up of human beings. Even the faceless troopers have faces. Arguably, this could make the Federation even more frightening: if real people are involved in systematic oppression, it is much more hideous than something caused by inhuman monsters. In fact, though, the effect of presenting the Federation as an organisation of people seems to be to humanise it. There is never any suggestion that the Federation is less than a totalitarian nightmare state, but it is a state in which a huge number of people live and work without necessarily being unhappy, and this is something which we see on screen.

There’s just enough equivocation in B7 to make us wonder whether Blake’s ideas are justified, and this ought to make us think about what Blake is fighting for, and whether there can be any such thing as a just war. Presumably, Blake wants the people of the Federation to have a better life by virtue of being free, but given the suffering involved in his means, and given that many of the citizens we see are in fact content, we have to wonder whether he is entirely justified. Of course, morality can’t really be evaluated in rationalistic or qualitative terms. In Pedler and Davis’s The Moonbase, the Doctor says, “There are some corners of the universe which have bred the most terrible things, things which act against everything that we believe in. They must be fought.” That’s Blake’s philosophy as well, the danger being that in acting on the principle that the Federation is evil, he’ll lose sight of the good of the people he’s supposedly fighting for. He tells us explicitly that he wants to sweep away the Federation, not to run it. However, given the chaos caused by the destruction of a world order—even an imperfect one like real life—in Survivors, it’s worth wondering whether Blake’s revolution, if successful, wouldn’t simply destroy everything, and turn on itself.

At the end of the day, it’s difficult to see any clear patterns about the nature of the community in these programmes. There are all sorts of reasons for this. Not all of either series were written by the same individual, and in every episode there must have been a certain amount of shared responsibility between writer, script editor, producer, etc. Nor were either Survivors or B7 made as political treatises, but as entertainment. At the same time, though, it’s possible to see complex ideas about civilisation going on in each, which keep coming back to the notion of the small community. To some extent, this is the nature of a television series, which presents us with a small group of characters who get to know each other week by week, as we come to understand them. Against the background of the huge—if not entirely faceless—Federation, we come to know a very few characters on the Liberator. The effect is starker in Survivors, where small, isolated communities are all that is left of civilisation. We keep coming back to small groups of characters, but we get the impression that this is where the real life of mankind is: in talking to one another.

Alastair Harrison
POLICE-BOXY BLUES

"It should change" — Susan, An Unearthly Child part 2

With the possible exception of the Daleks, it’s the most recognisable element of Doctor Who’s varied iconography. In the most recent issue of DWM (no. 279), Paul Cornell, Lani Parkin and Gareth Roberts all described it as one of the few aspects of the ‘old’ series which should survive any revamp (isn’t that a great name for the first episode of a new series? ‘Revir’?). Cornell in particular, but also Orman & Blum have argued in novels that the Police Box perfectly represents the ethos of the programme. ’I could have changed it ages ago,’ the Doctor confided. ’But I like the shape. And the motto. Call here for help. That’s what I do.’

—Human Nature.

It’s as sacred as anything. But I think that we should carefully consider whether it deserves its unsanctified status. You see, there are two ways that the programme could return. Either as a direct, unashamed continuation of all that has gone before, as the 1996 telemovie tried to do, or as a totally fresh start, with everything up for grabs. In my mind, with regards to the programme’s established backstory, it should be all or nothing when it comes to any new stuff. With no middle ground.

I’m not going to argue which of the two approaches is preferable. When it comes to which is more likely, however, then it would have to be the fresh start. It’s obvious that the fan community doesn’t have the clout to get the series going again on its own, and an independent professional would not want to hear about twenty-six years (plus one May evening?) written in stone, or D3 videotape at least. As Cornell points out in the aforementioned DWM article, you can’t just ignore the c-word, or try too obviously not to contradict it — doing this ‘would, in the end, mean ditching it and overwriting it’.

Cornell also asserts that ‘as for trappings, then that’s just the Police Box’. I’d like to go further. A police box in the 21st century can’t mean what it meant to those watching the BBC on that cold November night in 1963.

Now it would be a much greater shock for that blue wooden door to swing open revealing a cramped wooden interior, rather than humming interdimensional white noise, as the programme itself realised as long ago as Logopolis. A different article in the same issue (I know I’ve criticised DWM elsewhere, but — great jumping gobstoppers! — I’m forced to acknowledge that it can still set those little fanish grey cells in motion) refers to how, ’56 years on, it’s easy to miss how important it is that Ian walks right round the exterior of the Police Box, thus establishing that it is a very small shape on the outside’ (Richard Bignell).

The first episode of my posited ‘fresh start’ would have to be centred around a contemporary viewpoint. Inevitably to some extent a remake of the original first episode, it would have to recapitulate the utter headspin of ‘bigger in the inside’ that William Russell communicates so effectively in An Unearthly Child. I’m sorry, but much as I cherish it and what it means to us, I just don’t think that the Police Box can do that on its own anymore. The ultimate proof of that is the fact that — some time in the 1980s — the BBC purchased the rights to the Police Box design from the Metropolitan Police. For me, that’s when the Police Box became a fictional entity, rather than something you could expect to see in real life.

So, the TARDIS has got to symbolise something of our time (now, effectively, the early 21st century), something contemporary and almost certainly British, standing in the midst of an alien, or prehistoric, or futuristic landscape. The alternative, of course, is to have a chameleonic circuit that works. This was I believe, although I’m open to correction) the original intention of the production team. In 1963, this was far too expensive, but it’s certainly possible now. This isn’t what I’d personally choose, though: as I’ve indicated above, the TARDIS works as a recognisable element of home, a time-space craft that came to London (nowhere else, surely, would be conceivable), and like its owner — wherever or whenever he (or she: that’s a different article!) may have come from — has adopted a local appearance, and habits.

Now, you will ask me, if not the Police Box, then what? And I must say, well, to be perfectly honest I’m not sure. What do you think? Phone boxes are out: those that have doors have far too much glass in them. A small electricity substation? Would explain the humming, but not quite the right size, and surely you wouldn’t want to explain the humming anyway? An ornately sculpted wardrobe, found perhaps in the tried and tested junkyard, or standing, incongruously polished on the floorboards of an otherwise empty flat? You probably don’t like any of these. Some of you may well think my words are haresy. But, to return to the DWM article that inspired this babbling, if Mark Gatiss is right and ’the main problem with the TV Movie was its over-reverence’, then we should gear ourselves up to be ruthless.

John Wilson

Legoland

I finished picking the lock and nudged the door open. There was a guard in the corridor, but he had his back to me. I knew I had no chance of causing him any damage through his thick armour. It was made of some kind of brightly coloured, heavy-duty plastic: something experimental, perhaps, made by the Americans, or maybe the Dutch. It occurred to me, though, that the design of the armour, while tough, was none too practical. The centre of gravity was too high, and one good kick high up would send the guard to the floor. He wouldn’t have enough flexibility in his legs to get up again without help. I crept into the corridor, but neglected to stop the cell door swinging shut behind me. The guard lumbered towards me when he heard the sound, lifting his weapon to cover me. I was too fast for him, though, and a good kick to the chest left him on the floor—all seven feet of him.

I knew I had only precious minutes before the guard would be able to summon help, and the alarm would be raised. I hoped Steed would be all right on his own, but my best chance of finding him would be to reach the headquarters of the megalomaniac genius who had caused all the trouble in the first place. I stepped out of the gauze into the open air and onto the grass. The sky was blue and the clouds white, as they always are in England, but the grass had been cut into strange circles, in a grid pattern. The circles were formed by longer blades of grass, each about three inches high, with the surrounding grass cut to an inch or less. Each circle was about six inches in diameter, I didn’t understand until I heard a bizarre double-click from behind me, and turned to see one of the guards levelling a bazooka at my head. As I leapt away from him, somersaulting over a car and a horse-trough and landing on a motorbike, I realised that the grass circles had been specially strengthened with a liquid steel alloy, and that the guards’ custom-made boots clipped into them to give added support when firing heavy weapons, as well as
to prevent them suffering the fate that the one in the cell-
block had faced.

Keeping my head down, I revved the electric motor of
the motorbike and started it with a squeal of tyres. There
was only one building in the compound that could possibly
be the headquarters: the castle. It was at the top of a hill,
and everything about it bespoke solidity, even the flags
which rigidly refused to flutter in the breeze. I was resolved
to topple it, though. One key stone removed and Lars
Brickston, the children's favourite industrial tycoon, would
down in pieces.

I sped over the drawbridge as it began to lift, and the
bike jumped off the far end. As I landed I threw my weight
to the ground, abandoning the bike and skidding myself
under the portcullis a mere fraction of a second after it
came crashing down. Interestingly, the materials of the
castle—brickwork, portcullis and drawbridge— all seemed
to be made of the same heavy-duty plastic as was the guards'
armour. As I dusted my leather catsuit down and looked
around for something to use as a weapon, I considered
the implications of this. Brickston had rather put all his eggs in
one basket: something which could attack that plastic, such as
a specially-formulated acidic compound or a genetically-
engineered virus, could cause his whole empire to crumble.

There was no weapon to be seen in the courtyard, not
so much as an abandoned pikeman. Brute force, it seemed,
had failed for now. There was nothing for it: I would have
to rely on panache and sophistication. Pausing only to
sabotage the mechanism of the portcullis—Brickston
wouldn't be getting reinforcements very quickly—I strolled
towards the Great Hall in as nonchalant a manner as
possible. I knew I was being watched, and I knew that for
the next few minutes, it was vital that I seem as calm,
collected and unconcerned as possible. Brickston had to be
made to think he hadn't a chance against a nation of
people as steadfast as I was to appear, so that he would
lose heart and make a stupid mistake. Then and only then
could I engage him and his guards in earnest combat.

The double doors were ajar. I paused for a second.
The sensible thing would be to peer inside for a moment to
assess the opposition, then proceed accordingly. In the
event, I simply put my back into it and threw the doors
wide open. I didn't need to check to know that I was
outnumbered. Half a dozen suits of armour, with stylised
suits of clothes painted onto them in primary colours,
turned their identical faces towards me.

'Ah, Mrs Peel. I've been expecting you,' Brickston's
voice boomed over a tannoy system.

'Good afternoon, Mr Brickston,' I replied, leaning up against a giant plastic
horse. 'Have you been able to construct a fool-proof plan to take over the country?'

'Indeed I have, Mrs Peel. In fact, your
words are fortuitous—it is indeed "Fool
Proof." I could hear the double-inverted
commas and the capital letters, and then I
knew that Lars Brickston was quite, quite
mad, 'No one in England will be so foolish,
so stupid, as to be unsuceptible to the
addiction of my toys. But the real work will begin with the
most intelligent portion of the population. People such as
yourself, Mrs Peel.'

'Flattered, I'm sure.

'You realised that the means of escaping your cell lay
in the manipulation of the bricks at your disposal. The key
to the lock depended on the correct sequence of bricks
being attached to it. Did you ever study Mathematics, Mrs
Peel?'

'Dabbled, no more. "One, two, buckle my shoe," you
know?'

'But you appreciate the implications of my little toys.
There are two ways to fit two one-by-one bricks together,
sixty-six methods of adhering two two-by two units ... and
the increase is exponential. Can you imagine what beautiful
gonmetry could be created by minds such as yours working
with tools like these, Mrs Peel? I shall demolish Blenheim
Palace and replace it with something greater; the
Westminster Palace will be exposed as the architectural
scam it is. I shall challenge the Tower of Babel, but where
it was built to reach heaven, I shall build to reach perfect
order, perfect architecture, perfect Mathematics!'

I could hear him spluttering and spitting as he spoke.
It wasn't very appealing.

'What's all very well and good, Mr Brickston, but what
about my friend?'

'Steed?' Brickston sniffed. 'A rank amateur. He
appreciates the game, certainly, but he has no
understanding of the higher maths required to break the
lock of his cell.'

A polite cough from behind me, 'You're quite right, of
course,' said Steed. 'I must have been lucky. But do you
know, six-by-two on three-by one attached to a flat
eight-by-six just felt right.'

'How did you get into the castle?' I murred, 'I
jammed the portcullis.'

He grinned. 'Pole-vaulted! I was on the school team,
you know.'

Brickston gurgled with rage, and one of the suits of
armour split across the waist, its top half hinging back to
reveal his slight form jabbing at a remote control unit.

'The Wizard of Oz himself, remarked Steed.'

'The Wizard?' I replied, 'Surely you mean Dorothy?'
The armoured suit Brickston was wearing had a pig-tailed
wig pressed onto its head.

The roof of the Great Hall swung open on gigantic
hinges, and a huge missile in the centre of the room was
lifed on a launch crane as the remaining guards lumbered
towards us.

'Today, London,' shrieked Brickston, 'Tomorrow—
Mathematical Utopia!'

He never stood a chance. The guards dropped like
ninepins as Steed and I knocked them into one another,
and Brickston was too far gone to even notice as he was
burned up in the flames emanating from his own rocket,
still safely anchored to the ground. As Steed and I looked
out over the green grass and blue lakes of Brickston's little
empire, we couldn't help but admire its beauty.

'Vet would be a good site for an ambassadorial house,'
he told me, Mrs Peel.'

'Vet,' I replied, 'But do you know what
would be even better?' He shook his head,
'An amusement park!'

-Alastair Harrison, from an original idea by
Matthew Peacock
...As if you needed one. Still, might come in handy someday, and with QAF sparking a small Doctor Who revival (sad, isn’t it? Saved by a show about underaged sex), it’s about time Tides jumped on the bandwagon. Consider this an LGB guide reversed, with a few non-Wo (but fun) bits added.

[Caveat: I’m not sure if it’s complete or not, especially since I missed Episode 2 and the end of Episode 1. Still, if you’ve spotted something I haven’t, that gives you a nice opportunity to feel smug. Enjoy it.]

**Episode 1**

Vince, who has a Dalek aerator in his fish tank, watches the final scene of Episode 1 of Pyramids of Mars. Sharp-eyed viewers (and Tom Baker anoraks) will notice a continuity error: when Vince first watches the scene, you hear buzzing, then a fade out to the theme tune; when he rewinds it and watches it again, you hear buzzing, then Namins screaming, then the theme tune. According to the ‘Vince’s Flat’ website, the scene is also only about half as long as it should be, and the credits should have switched from Tom Baker to Elisabeth Sladen by the time Vince switches off.

Earlier in the episode, Vince spends the night ‘chasing some bloke who turns out to be like mad, really mad. He’d got every episode of *Juliet Bravo* on tape.’ (Er...) Vince’s shag of the evening has a father who is ‘into Marga’.

The fact that Stuart cops off with a bloke in a telephone box at one point may be a reference to something, but we’re not sure what.

**Episode 3**

Vince’s drug dealer claims that he can also provide him with copies of Episode 4 of The Tenth Planet and the colour Episode 3 of Planet of the Daleks (sparking, according to DWM, a totally false ‘missing-episode-found’ rumour). Vince also takes home a BBC producer who has worked on various cult television shows, but who turns out to have a rare STD, which isn’t directly relevant to Doctor Who, but is a fun anti-Beeb joke anyway.

**Episode 5**

The famous bit in which Vince’s potential shag decides he’d rather watch Genesis of the Daleks (the clip we see them watching is of Ronson’s death, from Episode 4: Davros’ speech continues under the subsequent dialogue), then insists on telling Vince the plot (although Vince knows it, of course), and, on leaving, tells him to ‘beware the Mentiiads’. Cameron mentions having been terrified of the one with the killer dummies as a child (suggesting that he’s younger than he looks, as it wouldn’t have been shown in Australia till 1972 at the earliest—that, or he’s lying through his [false] teeth).

**Episode 7**

For Vince’s birthday Cameron buys him a boxed set of The Trial of a Time Lord, which he already had, as well as a Mini, but is upstaged by Stuart’s present: a full-sized, remote-controlled K9. Trivia point: its name is not mentioned, for some (possibly cost-related?) reason.

**Episode 8**

In which we discover that Vince can only love the man who knows the name of all the actors who have played the Doctor, and which of those actors ‘doesn’t count’. K9 makes another cameo appearance, and this time is named, as is the Doctor to whom he was companion (‘Thanks for K9, I’m really pleased with it. Him. Tom Baker says ‘him’, doesn’t he?’...). Vince describes a workmate as ‘having that Fox Mulder look.’ Stuart defines Vince’s social life as consisting of nothing but watching ‘cheap science fiction videos’.

Fiona Moore

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[http://www.bbc.co.uk/doctorwho/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/doctorwho/)

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**Work in Progress**

“Have a look at this – it’s my new story for Tides!”

“Oh, cheers Dave. Does it have a title?”

“Not yet. I was hoping I’d think up one before we got to publication.”

“Well, tell me how it goes.”

Night was falling as the man on horseback emerged out of the forest and found himself at the gates of a small walled village. He reined in his horse and looked around him for signs of life, his hand resting on the hilt of his electronic sword. Before long he heard a discreet cough. A peasant, evidently posted to keep an eye on the gates, had appeared before him.

“Evening, my lord,” the peasant said, tugging his forelock a touch obsequiously.

“Given that the Doctor hasn’t arrived yet I’m guessing that this is going to be one of those enigmatic stories where you won’t have a clue what’s going on unless you know each and every Doctor Who story ever written inside out...”

“Which we do.”

“Which we do, but even so, Dave, I think you ought to let the unenlightened have some chance of understanding what’s going on.”

“Okay – I’ll do a bit of info-dumping.”

“Cool.”

“I am Count Grendel of Gracht,” said the man on horseback impressively. “Until recently I planned to take over the planet of Tara by means of an ingenious scheme involving androids. However, I was defeated by a rapsodion known as the Doctor. This was in an unfortunate period of my life I have mentally christened *The Androids of Tara*. The Doctor was seeking something called the Key to Time. I believe. I intend to take a brutal vengeance upon him one day, but first I see that I have arrived at a small, isolated village on the very edge of this continent, far away from my own estates at Castle Gracht.”

The peasant stared at him. “All I said was, ’Evening, my lord,’” he commented plaintively.
"Er, I was hoping for slightly more subtle info-dumping than that."
"It did the trick, didn't it?"
"I suppose so. Maybe we can adjust it later. Carry on with the story while I'm thinking about it."

"What brings you here, my lord?" asked the peasant.
The Count smiled darkly. "You will soon find out. This village is vital to my plans for revenge, but I am afraid, my friend, that you are not." As he spoke he raised his gloved right hand high into the air.

Suddenly a dark shape burst out of the forest and, before the peasant had chance to cry out, his throat was slashed, so vicious was the creature's attack. He crumpled to the ground, dead. He never saw what attacked him.

"Hm, very enigmatic."
"Well you can't have a Doctor Who story starting without a random extra biting the dust, can you?"
"I suppose not. You'd better carry on with the story."
"Ah, at this point we have a change of scene."

With a noise so familiar that it scarcely warrants mentioning, the TARDIS materialised on the other side of the village. A short-haired girl wearing a bomber jacket and carrying a rucksack rushed out.

"It's safe, Professor!" she called back into the TARDIS.
"I wish you wouldn't call me that, Ace," murmured the Doctor as he followed her out of the time machine. He locked the doors behind him and stared mysteriously at the village.

"Where are we?" asked Ace.
"The planet Tara," the Doctor replied. "I came here once before."
"So why have you come here again?"
"Unfinished business, Ace. Come on.

And with that he strode off into the centre of the village, energetically using his umbrella as a walking stick.

"You'd think that, now he's in his seventh incarnation, he'd bother to tell me things," Ace muttered to herself grumpily, as she set off after him.

"More subtle info-dumping?"
"I thought so."
"I see you're making sure that we know which Doctor it is from the very beginning."

"Oh, yes, I can't stand those stories where the author tries to keep it a secret - it's such a tired fanfic device. And half the time you can't tell if the Doctor in question is the fifth or the eighth anyway."

"Fair enough."

The time travellers met no one in the narrow streets of the village and, had it not been for the occasional muffled thud and shout that drifted through the night air, they might have thought it was deserted. They followed these sounds and eventually came to a large wooden hall - evidently the main building of the settlement. The Doctor frowned and, motioning Ace to follow him, made his way into the hall through the large doors at one end.

The explanation for the deserted nature of the village and for the strange sounds soon became apparent: the entire population of the village tribe was inside the building. Most of them were sitting motionlessly, watching two young men fighting viciously for their entertainment. The young men were shouting obscene curses at one another, and at some members of the audience, as they clashed with a brutality that made even Ace wince. The scene was eerie: no one else in the room spoke a word - all were simply watching the fighters and they exuded a strange air of impatience as they did so.

All save one. A young man with dark hair, whose extraordinary good looks more than made up for the shortness of his stature looked on from where he was lounging against the left hand wall of the hall. He was watching the two men fight, radiating tolerance and good humour, an indulgent smile creeping across his face as one of the fighters smashed through one of the walls backwards first...

"Oh so this is one of those pieces of Fanfic where the author gratuitously inserts friends of his own from real life into his story, is it? The short handsome bloke's supposed to be you, I take it?"
"Well, I'm flattered if that's what you think..."
"Let me guess: that character's going to be the one who saves the day for the Doctor and ends up walking into the sunset with a random beautiful female?"
"Ah, I see you've had a sneaky look at the ending. I quite like that idea actually."
"Get rid of these people - it's only going to confuse people who read this story in years to come..."
"Ha!"
"...and it's just going to annoy those who do get the reference."
"Oh, if you insist. What do you think of this?"

Suddenly a claw burst through one of the walls and three terrifying shapes burst into the hall. They were hideous monsters - over seven feet tall, with gaping jaws and terrifying black fur. The hitherto static people sitting in the middle of the room screamed and ran chaotically in all directions, occasionally running into the path of one of the monsters with invariably fatal results. The Doctor grabbed Ace and, against her will, forced her to hide behind a table in the corner of the room.

The two men who had been fighting to keep the villagers amused turned as one on these hideous creatures. They seized their swords and charged at the creatures, having enough time to shout their war-cry "Al'NMatuelle!" before the monsters ripped their heads off.

The handsome young man was soon the only one of the villagers left alive. He advanced on the monsters, his hands outstretched. "Look, isn't there some better way of doing this?" he pleaded. "All this killing and maiming's only going to get us into trouble with the authorities. Couldn't we reach some sort of compromise?"

Shaking their heads the monsters roared in unison and savagely attacked the handsome young man. Their
claws ripped into his flesh and soon the young man's internal organs were cascading all over the room.

"Eeew! Couldn't you have thought of a slightly more pleasant way of doing it?"

"You wanted me to get rid of them and so I did. Besides, this is the new world of Doctor Who fiction where disposable characters die every five minutes in increasingly gory and violent fashions!"

"I think you've been reading too many Jim Mortimore books, Dave."

"Everyone will die! Even the Doctor and his companion will not emerge unscathed!"

"Ah, what's going to happen to them?"

"Well, the Doctor's going to be horribly tortured, that goes without saying. As for Ace, I was thinking of her nearly lose her life after contracting a weird space virus in circumstances you really don't want to know about and this'll probably involve warts and a certain amount of heavy-duty itching... Are you all right? You're looking a bit queasy."

"I'd just eaten, thank you very much, Dave. Carry on, if you must."

"Okay."

Count Grendel walked into the hall through the gap in the wall which the monsters had created and gave a satisfied nod.

"Excellent: you have done well," he told the monsters. They growled happily and ambled their way across the scene of carnage to where he was standing.

Ace watched them. "Why wouldn't you let me do something?" she demanded fiercely.

The Doctor was looking at the Count and the monsters with more terror in his eyes than she had ever seen before. "There are some forces in the universe so horrific that even I cannot hope to withstand them. We must act with extreme caution."

"Why? What are they?"


"Ah, I was wondering who the monsters were. So this is one of those fanatics where the author tries to reinvent a monster that was frankly a bit crap on TV and make them new, exciting and relevant."

"Yeah but there aren't many monsters left that haven't already been reworked – the Krotos, the Vardans... they've been rejigged. Hell, someone's even done the Dominators. In the end I was left with the choice of either the Taran Beast from Tara or the Magma Beast from Androzani Minor but unfortunately I couldn't have the beast of both worlds... Are you sure you're all right?"

"No, it's just that bad puns are almost as unpleasant as space viruses. Carry on, Dave, why don't you?"

"Okay."

The Count's head twisted round to look directly at where the Doctor and Ace were hiding; he had heard their panicked exchange.

"Come out, whoever you are!" he called.

Sheepishly the Doctor and Ace emerged from behind the table with their hands in the air. At once one of the Taran beasts hurled across the room towards them. It lunged out at the Doctor and, as he tried to get away, it succeeded in ripping the cream jacket from his back. The Time Lord jerked out of the garment and looked on in dismay as the Taran Beast jumped up and down on top of the jacket, rendering it utterly wearable.

"Never mind, Professor," said Ace cheerily, rummaging in her rucksack in a vain search for some nitro-nine.

"I never liked that jacket anyway."

The Doctor nodded, dodging another attempt by the creature to claw out his eyes. "It's just as well I've got that brown one back in the TARDIS, I'll change into it once we've finished here."

"I see you couldn't resist the temptation to explain a minor point in continuity mid-story."

"That's nothing – you just wait to get to the bit where I reveal that the Taran Beasts' newly discovered temporal powers not only causes the UNIT dating to get totally messed up but they also make the second Doctor remember events in The Five Doctors which he hasn't actually yet experienced! Impressed?"

"Frankly, Dave, no. And besides, that seventh Doctor jacket thing's already been done in Tides at least twice before now and with considerably more style. Look, I'm not really sure this is the right sort of story for the magazine..."

"But you haven't got to the end yet!"

"Oh all right, just so long as the Daleks don't appear for no readily apparent reason."

"Stop!" called out Count Grendel. The beast growled resentfully and loped off back to the other side of the room. "Who are you?"

"I'm the Doctor and this is my friend Ace," said the Doctor. "And before you ask, yes, I am the same Doctor who defeated your plan to usurp the throne of Tara."

"Perhaps," said Grendel, stroking his beard thoughtfully. "But even if you are the Doctor, you will not stop me now!"

"Why, what are you planning?"

"I have spent the last three years taming and training an army of Taran Beasts: with their enormous strength and recently-discovered ability to travel across time and space, I will conquer first Tara and then all of time and space! And I'm only telling you this because you will shortly die."

"No clichés left untold then?"

"Not a single one."

"I think not," said the Doctor triumphantly. "I only came here to ensure that you'd fall into my trap. You see, I've told some very powerful temporary allies of mine about
your plan and they’re about to deal with you once and for all.”

At this point a dozen or so a dozen or so metallic creatures of a vaguely pepper-pot complexion swarmed into the room and turned their blaster nozzles in the direction of the Count and the Taran Beasts.

“You are an enemy of the Daleks,” they declared in unison. “You will be exterminated! Exterminate! Exterminate!”

“Daleks?”

“Sorry. I just couldn’t help myself.”

“No Daleks – have someone else arrive randomly on the planet to save the Doctor’s bacon instead.”

“I’ll do the scene again.”

“I think not,” said the Doctor triumphantly. “I only came here to ensure that you’d fall into my trap. You see, I’ve told some very powerful temporary allies of mine about your plan and they’re about to deal with you once and for all.”

At this point a rather sardonic-looking man dressed entirely in red leather materialised in the middle of the room in a curiously implausible way. He took one look at Grendel and the Taran Beasts and gunned them down.

“Down and safe,” he said dispassionately into his teleport bracelet. “And by the way, Blake, your informant was wrong. I can’t see either Travis or Servalan here or, for that matter, any sign of a terrifying plot to destroy the Liberator.”

The Doctor strode over to the man and doffed his hat. “I’m afraid I might be to blame,” he said apologetically. “I think I may have misled your leader a touch.”

“That must have been a struggle,” the man replied dryly. He turned away from the Doctor and spoke into his bracelet. “Bring me back – there’s nothing of interest here.”

“No crossovers either.”

“All right, I’ll scrap that scene as well. Honestly, you’re getting so picky these days. How about we have another Doctor suddenly arrive to save the day? That way we get to have some amusing inter-Doctor banter. We could have a future Doctor turning up, like the Nick Briggs version or else we could use…”

“No! Look, Dave, this isn’t going to work at all. I don’t think we can print your story.”

“What’s wrong with it? It’s full of action, it’s got some good jokes, it’s got some good deaths. What more do you want out of a piece of fanfic?”

“I want a decent story for one thing – this thing’s just a succession of random incidents, loosely strung together.”

“Well, be fair: so are most Doctor Who short stories.”

“Sorry Dave, it just doesn’t reach the high standards which The Tides of Time sets.”

“Well, what would you suggest?”

“Oh, I don’t know. How about something like this? Something a little more… I don’t know. Something that’ll make you feel a bit wistful and yet melancholy at the same time…”

The Doctor walked through the ruined village sadly, carefully avoiding treading on any of the bones which were whitening in the sun.

“Perhaps I should have intervened to save them?” he said aloud. “But, without having to fight Count Grendel and his army of Taran Beasts, the Galactic Federation would never have been formed.” He scowled. “No, I can’t leave others to do my dirty work – I’ll take a stand against evil myself!”

He rushed back to the TARDIS. The frantic urgency with which he laid in a new course startled Ace.

“Where are we going?” she asked.

“London. 1963.”

“What do you think?”

“I had no idea you could improvise drabbles on the spot. Very impressive.”

“Thank you.”

“But you only wrote it to fill in a minor gap in continuity; you rely on the reader having an encyclopaedic knowledge of Who; you’ve nicked the basic idea from Genesis of the Daleks; and worst of all, it’s poigniant.”

“Ah but all Doctor Who fanfic has to be poigniant. It’s just one of those things.”

“How about we do a deal? I get to print my story adding your conclusion and I write some rubbish to fill up the gap about how the Doctor and Ace get away from the Taran Beasts and escape back to the TARDIS.”

“Hmm… It’s got potential, I suppose.”

“And that way we have a story with an enigmatic start, with obscure continuity, with bizarre in-jokes, with a crap monster reworked and, of course, it’d be poigniant.”

“I like it! I’ll even let you have the Daleks in for free, Dave.”

“Cheers.”

“You know, I think between the two of us, we may just have created the most perfect Doctor Who short story ever written.”

“Er, maybe.”

David Bickley
EDITORIAL
THE RETURN OF JO GRANT

She's back—and it's about time! Each of the last three issues of Tides features a story with Jo Grant in it. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, but it is remarkable that Jo seems to be enjoying a bit of a renaissance, where in the early part of this decade she tended to be dismissed out of hand. Of the third Doctor's companions, Liz Shaw was the intelligent, sophisticated one who was calm in a crisis and could whip up an interference generator at a moment's notice; Sarah Jane Smith was the go-ahead, progressive journalist who could whip up a women's lib movement on an alien world at a moment's notice; and Jo... Jo was the one in the middle, the silly one, the one who could maybe whip up a soufflé at a moment's notice, but who'd ruin a complex experiment in doing so.

The reassessment of Jo has its roots—as has so much else in our ideas about Doctor Who—in the Target novelisations. The third Doctor books were arguably the most consistently well-realised period of Doctor Who in print, because Terrance Dicks knew the era inside out, and he wrote most of the Pertwee novelisations. Most of those featured Jo, and for the nine-year-old who had never seen a Pertwee story on television, the three companions would tend to blur into one, and that one would be Jo. She was associated with the sparse but clear style of the novels, and so the video releases came as something of a shock. Carnival of Monsters was a wonderful and frightening book, but the television version was cheap-looking, even by Doctor Who standards, and almost unutterably silly. On the other hand, video releases of Liz Shaw stories seemed to show a programme which was taking pains to be sensible in its use of the bizarre: fantastic elements would be overlaid onto more or less accurate and credible concepts. While the video recorder made Liz look more like a character than the novelisations had done, it made Jo look distressingly like a bimbo.

As we all know, however, the pendulum swings both ways, and over the last three issues of Tides it's been swinging back into Jo's favour with a vengeance. In Tides 22 there was RED ALERT!, a story which evoked Terrance's style, and some of Malcolm Hulke's characters, while filling a gap in the Pertwee years: was there really never a Pertwee story with Cybermen? There is now! Then in Tides 23 there was Worst Case Scenario, which internalised both Jo and the Doctor to a greater extent than the action and drama of RED ALERT! had space for. In both of these cases, admittedly, Jo is little more than an adjunct of the Doctor himself: she doesn't really do anything separate from him that Liz or Sarah (or Susan, or Tegan, etc.) couldn't do. She's the generic companion, there to react to the Doctor and to the circumstances of the plot.

That being the case, though, it's interesting that in these consecutive issues there have been third Doctor and Jo stories given that there would have been little difference if another companion—or even another Doctor—had been substituted. There's obviously something appealing about Jo (other than the obvious) which has been activated in the late nineties, whereas she was reviled in the early nineties (along with Pertwee himself). And it's not the silliness which is being reassessed. For years, Graham Williams tenure as producer of Doctor Who (Tom Baker with variously Leela, K9 and Romana (both versions)) was held to be of poor quality because it didn't take the programme seriously, and this in itself seems to have been reassessed in this decade as the art of postmodernism. Reassessments of the Pertwee middle years, however, don't say, 'Yes, it's silly, but you have to enjoy that in order to understand it'. Instead they attempt to make those stories more like the 'serious' stories of Pertwee's first season. To some extent this is entirely possible. Despite the fact that all its cliffhangers are the same, The Mind of Evil has some excellent ideas, many of which are well executed. What is modern society supposed to do with criminals and nuclear missiles (spot the parallelism)? The enemy in The Mind of Evil—aside from the Master as special guest villain—is human nature amplified and projected. What are we supposed to do about that? But to read Terror of the Autons as very much more than knockabout fun would be a mistake. There are big ideas in Pertwee stories, like the intergalactic war in Frontier in Space, where we actually see and talk to representatives of both sides. But there is silliness and, yes, camp as well. Any attempt to read The Curse of Peladon as a serious discussion of Britain's prospective membership of the EEC is going to have a job accounting for King Peladon's hairstyle.

And what place Jo in all these currents of assessment and reassessment? In this issue of Tides she gets her own story, Lawful Wedded Wife, away from the Doctor and post-Green Death. It's a little cracker and well worth a look, and it's also indicative of how fan-fic attempts to cope with problems of how to assess the Pertwee era. What LWV and books like Paul Leonard's Genocide do is to try to give Jo a character, something we arguably saw fairly little of on screen. This is in no way meant as an attack on Katy Manning, or the talented group of scriptwriters who created the Pertwee era. They did their job to perfection, and Jo did her job to perfection, which is why she was regarded with such affection by readers of the Target novels. She was the ideal companion, there to ask questions, get into trouble, fall in love at the drop of a hat, provide a moment of comic relief, have the occasional brilliant idea (though not too brilliant) and scream. Anything else would be extraneous. We never found out much about Jo's past (she had an uncle in the secret service—that was about all) or her private life (she once went on a date with Mike Yates), but then that made no difference to her rôle. What this meant, though, was that we knew very little about her.

This makes Jo a perfect character for novelists to work with. With relatively little emotional baggage already attached, she's a blank template, ready for all-new emotional baggage for the nineties. This is the sort of thing which the novel is better suited to than a screenplay. A drama works to the moment, whereas a novel can internalise and use the past.

So maybe the attraction of Jo is that she can be whatever the modern fan-writer wants her to be. She can be open, honest, even silly, but she can also be a testing-ground for ideas about people that would have been unusual or inappropriate in an early seventies children's program. Even more than that, Jo can represent in microcosm part of the dual appeal of the Missing Adventures. On the one hand, they can emulate a particular era of the series, but on the other, they can act as laboratories for examining the attitudes of the nineties and (for instance) the seventies. A nineties version of Jo (Genocide) exists partially to be compared with the seventies version we remember, and a book written in the nineties as though it were a television story from the seventies implicitly asks us to think about what the differences are between the two media. The difference is represented by Jo Grant.
Time to say goodbye to Al and Mat—but which is which?

Will Tides of Time Return?