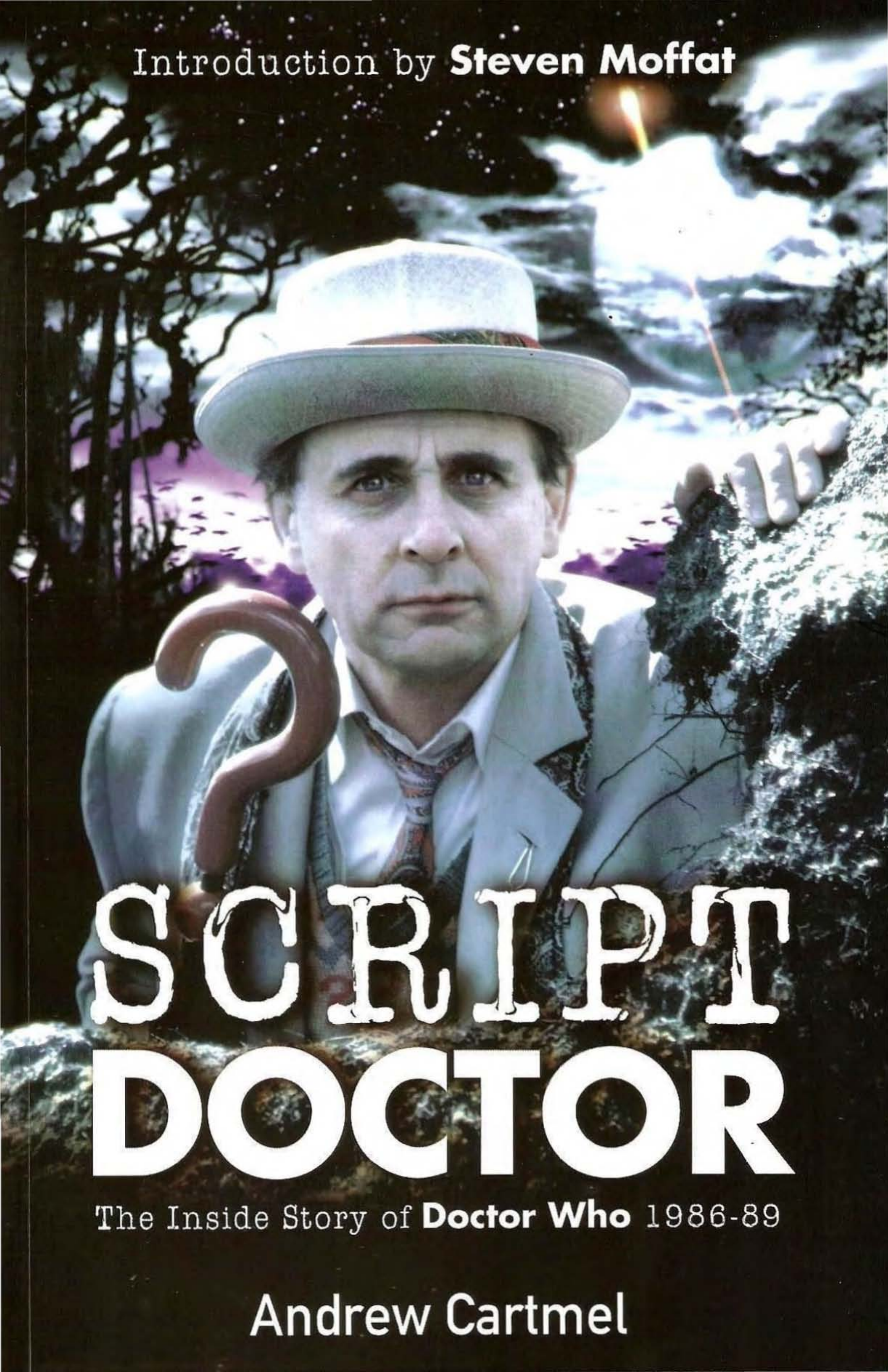




Introduction by **Steven Moffat**

SCRIPT DOCTOR

The Inside Story of **Doctor Who** 1986-89

Andrew Cartmel

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Script Doctor: The Inside Story of Doctor Who 1986-89

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INTRODUCTION

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As I'm fond of telling people, running **Doctor Who** is a bit like being strapped to the front of train, yelling directions to the driver.

At this point, people usually say "You don't have to yell directions to a train driver, there are tracks. It goes the same way whatever you shout!"

And I say, "Yep."

Back in the old days, when I was first being strapped to the front of the **Doctor Who** train – no, let's abandon that metaphor, I'm far too prone to that sort of thing – when I first took this job, a scary thing happened. Russell T Davies, my far cleverer predecessor, wrote a book with Ben Cook. In it, he recorded, in heart-stopping, gut-lurching detail the day to day rollercoaster (metaphor alert) of making **Doctor Who**. As I said to Russell at the time, reading it, for me, was like taking possession of a big scary mansion, and finding the tearstained diary of the previous occupant (whereabouts unknown). I read page after page of writer/producer terror and sucked the corner of my Dalek duvet, wondering if the same nightmares would befall me.

Reader, I wonder no more. Yes, they did. All those nightmares, day after day, were mine to cherish. I do love this job, more than anything else I've ever done – but I'd like you to remind me of that when I'm stretched past you.

However, there is more to read than Russell's wonderful book. Oh, we're not done yet. In the darker recesses of the **Doctor Who** mansion (which is strapped, you will remember, to the front of the **Doctor Who** train, on top of the **Doctor Who** rollercoaster) there is another *Document of Fear*. I speak of the volume you hold in your hands; the equally wonderful diary of Andrew Cartmel, the last of the classic series script editors; the man who saw in Sylvester McCoy and saw out the eighties.

Ah, now there's a subject - eighties **Doctor Who**. There is a fair amount of

nonsense talked about this era. While the general audience has many fond memories of this time, among the fans, there is a different story. Despite many of John Nathan-Turner's productions topping the fan polls there is ... shall we say, controversy; a received idea that the show was past its best. I remember reading in some scif-fi mag a deeply stupid review of *The Caves of Androzani* (now hailed as the greatest story ever) complaining that it was all set in Portakabins! Not sure why this should be, but I can theorise.

I went to see the terrific Alan Partridge movie recently, and shortly afterwards got stuck in a conversation where I was being told, very firmly, that Alan hadn't been really good since the original radio series. And this bloke would know, apparently, because he was a fan 'from the very beginning.' But that's being a fan, isn't it? Telling people who aren't watching the show properly that it isn't any good any more!

I should know. That's exactly what I'm like. Frankly, I probably wrote that Portakabin review. So let's set the record straight.

In the last few years of classic **Doctor Who**, the show caught fire again. John Nathan-Turner took a mad but brilliant gamble and cast Andrew Cartmel as the Script Editor, and gave that fine old show a mighty kick up the backside. It took a moment to settle in (as you're about to read) but before you know it, there are shows like *Remembrance of the Daleks*, *Ghostlight*, *The Curse of Fenric*, *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* – some of my favourite stories ever – and in every episode a new, punky sensibility that made the tired old Doctor brand new and dangerous again.

Reading the story of how those shows came about, the arguments are familiar (sorry, Andrew, JN-T was completely right about the rocket launcher) but there is something very different from the **Doctor Who** I'm used to making. And no, I'm not talking about the budget - **Doctor Who** will never have enough money, and if it did, I'd still want more. No, I regret to say (for the sake of my much-compromised personal cool) I'm talking about love.

These days, **Doctor Who** is a jewel in the crown of the BBC. That's not new – it always was. What's new is that it is acknowledged. **Doctor Who** is loved and helped at every level of the BBC, just as it should be, and just as it needs. But in the late eighties, the Beeb's senior management were stupid enough to be embarrassed by what was once, and would be again, a flagship drama: they were happy to ignore it, to starve it, to let it die. Beyond stupid and

beneath contempt – decades later, it still makes me cross. I'm so glad it's not the good old days any more. You are about to read about how some great shows were made – it is remarkable that they were made in the circumstances they were.

One more thing. While we're on the subject of fan myths (we weren't, but let's pretend) there is also an idea floating about, that the old series and the new are somehow very different. Well, let's deal with that one right now. Go and watch *Survival*, the very last show of the classic series, back to back with *Rose*, the very first show of the revival. Both beautifully written and directed, and both indisputably the same show. As it always has been. As, I hope, it always will be. The seeds of everything the show became, were right back there in 1989. So thank you Andrew Cartmel, and good for you, John Nathan-Turner.

Enough about the past, and even the present – because one of the peculiarities of **Doctor Who** is that in all likelihood, its future creative leader is reading these words. Hello! Where have you been? Read on, my lucky friend, but with courage! And the very best of luck to you. And don't worry, I'll be along in a few years to tell you the show isn't as good as it used to be, and cut it out with the Portakabins.

Steven Moffat

October 2013

FOREWORD

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I remember John Nathan-Turner telling me the story of how Andrew Cartmel got the job script editing **Doctor Who**. John was currently the producer of the show and had the final, and indeed the only, say on who was hired for this critical post. He interviewed Andrew and they were getting along well and then he sprang the crucial question. ‘If you could achieve one thing with **Doctor Who**, what would it be?’

Andrew, without an instant’s hesitation, replied ‘Overthrow the government.’

John grinned, his eyes twinkling as he remembered the moment. ‘I decided to hire Andrew on the spot,’ he said. He went on to tell Andrew that he wouldn’t *actually* be able to overthrow the government, that the most he could do on a show like **Doctor Who** was get a message across about how black people and white people and green people and purple people were all equal. But he liked Andrew’s passion and conviction — and his sense of humour — and he knew he’d found the right man for the job.

I attended my own job interview with John in that same red office of his, full of **Doctor Who** paraphernalia. Normally when you go up for a job the meeting takes at most half an hour, and I only had enough charm for about half an hour. But the meeting went on for two hours, so I had to start recycling my charm. I got the job, though, and that was the first time I met Andrew.

We hit it off immediately because we were of like mind. Andrew was against the establishment and in favour of a healthy measure of anarchy. We also agreed on the way the Doctor’s character should develop — darker and more mysterious. It was like peeling an onion, stripping away the previous interpretations to reveal a new and more interesting layer to the character.

It was fun working with Andrew and he always involved the writers fully, bringing them along to meet me and discuss ideas. I always enjoyed these meetings, having a drink and chatting away. However, I seem to remember that most of the writers preferred hanging out with Sophie — and who can blame them?

We didn’t fully realise it at the time, but it was a golden age. Andrew got on with the scripts, John sat benignly in the captain’s cabin and Kate Eastal

made sure that the office ran smoothly in the midst of all the madness that goes with making **Doctor Who**. I just tried to learn my lines and not bump into the monsters.

I always had the impression that Andrew was having a great time, enjoying what he was doing (either that or he was a very good actor). I also felt he was always attuned to what I wanted to do with the Doctor and this gave me the courage to go further. Andrew was my ally.

During the years when we were making the show I remember Andrew was constantly writing things down in a notebook. I didn't realise he was keeping a diary — I thought he was being inspired. But reading this book, I'm very glad he did keep a diary, because he's succeeded in bringing a whole lost era vividly back to life. Now I wish I'd kept a diary myself. But I thought we were just making a TV programme. I ù ü E 0realise we were making history.

We never managed to overthrow the government. But we made some memorable televsion. And we did have a lot of fun.

Sylvester McCoy

Richmond, London, 31 January 2005

PROLOGUE

The Daleks come through here. Ace jumps through this window.

Wednesday 2 March 1988. A cool sunny day in West London. We were preparing to make *Remembrance of the Daleks*. In the morning we went out to look at a proposed location for the school in Ben Aaronovitch's story. Ben and I sat in Andrew Morgan's car. Driving through the bright London morning traffic. Coffee smell in the back of the white Volvo – Ben had a cup and so did Andrew. The school was on a side street just off Kings Road in Hammersmith. 'Macbeth Street,' said Lynn Grant, our assistant floor manager. 'And I have a theatrical background!'

'So have I,' said Andrew. They were talking about the old stage superstition about the Scottish Play. It's said to betoken disaster. Well, we would see. Personally, I had no fears. I knew this one was going to be a classic. I glanced over at Ben, a big bloke – all right, a fat bloke – with unruly black hair. He was wearing jeans, a T-shirt, a battered old leather jacket. Meeting him in the street, you'd think 'heavy metal slob'... until you started to talk to him.

It was clear from the amused eyes behind Ben's thick glasses that the big Aaronovitch brain was buzzing away productively on something. Ben is unique in that he's a natural born screenwriter but also understands science fiction. His script for the Dalek show was terrific and I couldn't wait to see it shot.

John Nathan-Turner was waiting outside the school, breath fogging on the cool air between puffs of smoke from one of his perennial cigarettes. John was a solid imposing man of middle height, whose stance suggested suppressed energy, or maybe coffee nerves. He had a fondness for cheerfully vulgar Hawaiian shirts, but if he was wearing one then it was buried under his winter sheepskin coat. He was called John Nathan-Turner, he told me, because there was already a John Turner on the Equity books. An actor then, he became a floor manager at the BBC and worked his way up, becoming the producer of **Doctor Who**, the most famous science fiction television series these isles had yet spawned. Hell, the most famous television series.

John was a former athlete (rugby player) with a cherub's face battered by booze, and a mass of curly black hair. His eyes gleamed with mischief.

We walked into the playground, Andrew Morgan showing us around.

Andrew was the director of the Dalek story. Lynn was his assistant, a foxy little chick. 'You see,' said Andrew as we walked across the empty winter playground, 'You can have camera platforms all around here.'

Into the deserted school. Warm sleepy smell of the gymnasium. Up a low-ceilinged stone stairwell. 'This takes me back,' said John. 'This takes *me* back,' said Ben, who would have been in a school like this himself only four or five years earlier. He was the youngest writer on the team and one of the youngest to work at the BBC.

Upstairs, there was a chemistry lab exactly as I'd imagined the one in the script. Andrew Morgan strode around proudly. 'The Daleks come through here. Ace jumps through this window.' Sunlight striking across the pale wood floorboards. There was a peaceful, gentle vibe to the place. 'It's a nice school, isn't it?' said Ben. And he smiled and fumbled for a cigarette. John offered him one and they lit up as we stepped outside, back into the cool March air and the empty playground.

I stared up at the sky over Hammersmith. I was feeling a mounting sense of excitement as my second season of **Doctor Who** began to move into production. I was halfway through my sojourn on the show and it was going to be one hell of a ride.

CHAPTER 1

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The Invasion of the Scripts.

John invited me into his office with Graeme Curry, another of our upcoming writers, to watch Kate O'Mara, the Rani, being interviewed on a talk show in Birmingham. 'Come on darling,' said John to the screen. 'Get the plug in.'

The following Monday, I experienced for the first time in my life the physical shock of seeing my name in print. I was leafing through **Doctor Who Magazine** and suddenly found I was in it. It said something like, 'Since the new script editor, Andrew Cartmel, has just arrived, it seems likely that it was the producer who commissioned Pip and Jane Baker.' Very astute. I was glad that people could work out for themselves that I was not responsible for *Time and the Rani*.

Thursday 16 April 1987. Kate Eastal's birthday. Agave her a card for five-year-olds with a punch-out red devil mask. 'It's great!' said Kate. 'It's topical!' It was also the day of the producer's run at the Rehearsal Rooms in North Acton before we went into the studio for *Time and the Rani*. Shaking hands with Sylvester. Bonnie dancing in a mirror. 'This is the scene where I put the microthermister in,' said Sylv. 'Take it out, you mean.' For the purposes of rehearsal the microthermister was an empty vodka bottle.

The following Monday, we were in the studio for **Doctor Who** serial 7D, *Time and the Rani*. We were shooting the first block of material that hadn't been shot on location. I sat in the carpeted darkness of the control room looking at a big glowing clock that had an arrow for a second hand. There was absolute silence, lights placed over steps so people didn't trip. Being new to the process, I was thinking that the way things were shot was so fragmented, how could they begin to make sense of the story? The technical problems were so immense that the acting was the least of it. On one of the screens smoking blood ran down a trough. 'We'll do this rehearsal without gunge,' said Andrew. 'What I want to know, John, is what all those extra hips and legs are doing there.'

'Hello Pip,' I said to Pip Baker. 'It's Andrew,' said Jane Baker, who was standing beside him. Down on the studio floor, Andrew Morgan was eating an apple. The camera jerked into a close-up of his blue sweater. 'Cue the gunge.' We saw technicians' sneakers in the Tetrap eyrie. The mystery of the image as the camera drew back amongst black curtains and people and cameras and props. We saw Einstein at lunch. 'Kindly keep smoking to a minimum in the interest of health and comfort,' read the sign in the control room by the monitor screens. (It seems unbelievable now, but at the time people were indeed allowed to smoke in places like this. As an ardent non-smoker, I spent

my years on *Doctor Who* gagging on cigarettes belonging to the old-school chain-smokers who still dominated the field.) Dave Chapman, the video effects guy with long hair and a beard, smoked hand-rolled cigarettes in liquorice Rizla papers. He was watching snooker on his black and white monitor.

Geoff Powell wandered through shot with a ladder. 'That's the shot,' said Andrew, 'if Dickhead can get out.' Geoff had chosen his own nickname, but it couldn't have been less appropriate. Even on our low budget he was a designer of genius. On the studio floor, Kate O'Mara said, 'I wasn't on my marks. I couldn't see the fuckers at all.'

'Where's Richard's head?' Excitement. Coloured lights. 'Recording is running up.' The cover for the TARDIS viewing screen squeaked something awful as it went up and down. Tetrap voices distorted. I left the quiet darkness of the control room to go down onto the studio floor. The hair on the top of my head was stirring under the heat of the lights. The studio had a lemon shampoo smell under the blaze of those hot lights. There were folded newspapers stuck in cameras as everyone waited to get started.

We were behind schedule. People were starting to blame other people. Tension was rising. Andrew was in the control room talking to Tony Redston on the intercom. 'We are slowing things down considerably,' said Andrew. 'We've got to give them a break,' said Tony. 'I appreciate that, old love,' Andrew responded patiently.

Actors in Tetrap suits were hanging upside down in front of a blue screen. They looked very hot in their hairy suits with their monstrous heads removed, red faces showing. The rostrum they were positioned on was getting in the way of the camera. I sat in the producer's booth with John as he's reminisced about the good old days of disciplinarian BBC floor managers who stood for no nonsense and would call out the first line of every scene, and so on. 'We had some wonderful lesbians,' said John wistfully, 'but they're all directing now.'

Andrew was in the control room saying, 'Well, move the fucking rostrum.'

I was arranging last-minute drafts of scripts from Malcolm Kohll and Ian Briggs, so that we'd have five out of six for the final production in typing before I went on holiday. Things were getting a bit hectic. A taxi was sent to pick up one script from Malcolm's house in Islington. Meanwhile, (I just rung Fraser and Dunlop, my literary agents, where I'd set up an appointment for Ian (I felt he was a good writer who deserved an agent) and then asked Hayley, my agent's assistant, to grab episode two of *Dragonfire* from him and put it on a bike. 'They're coming from all over London!' said John. 'It's the invasion of the scripts.'

Nine days later, I was back from Spain, sitting in my office with my ears peeling from sunburn. There were green leaves spreading over Shepherd's Bush Green. I walked into the **Doctor Who** office that morning and there were two giant circular photographs of Sylvester McCoy, one in colour, the other black and white, bigger than the biggest wheels of the biggest vehicle you've ever seen. They were each the size of a kids' paddling pool, wrapped in plastic, propped up against the filing cabinets, with address labels on them. BBC Enterprises had ordered them for an exhibition but the contractor had fucked up, interpreting the dimensions as inches instead of centimetres. I loved it. It was like **Spinal Tap**. So anyway, Enterprises was unable to use them and simply gave them to us. I immediately grabbed the black and white one and stuck it on top of my filing cabinet (where it would remain for months). Sylvester's giant face looked down at my office, seeming to stare cross-eyed at the address label on his own nose.

Across the corridor, director Chris Clough was working on this season's three-parters (*Dragonfire* and *Delta and the Bannermen*). I was delighted to hear that he was considering Theresa Russell as the teenage English biker in Malcolm's *Delta and the Bannermen* script. I didn't tell him that she wasn't right for the script because I wanted to meet her. She had starred in Nic Roeg's **Bad Timing**, which was one of my all-time favourite films.

I went to the Rehearsal Rooms wearing a T-shirt I had bought in Spain (A Lichtenstein style comic panel of a crying girl's face and a word balloon reading 'Nuclear war? There goes my career'). I was here to watch the second producer's run – the scenes which would be recorded in the studio the next week. I was beginning to see it all come together, the bits from location and the previous studio stuff, and piecing it all together in my head. A priceless education. Chris Sandeman was loping fatly around, standing in for a Tetrap. Mark Greenstreet edged over to me and whispered, 'That's my favourite line.' His favourite line was, 'If you're not careful you'll find out from inside that cabinet.'

'Janet Fielding's got that one,' said John, looking at my T-shirt.

Back into the studio on Sunday for round two; the final three-day block of *Time and the Rani*. Reggae on Shepherd's Bush Green in the cold night, booming off the windows of Barclays Bank. It was a summer festival, though it didn't feel like summer. I went into the studio early to look at Geoff Powell's set. Gold paint and brown paint and black Day-Glo had been run together on the floor and the resulting blend ingeniously made the wood look like marble. Up that close, the set looked good, but it looked like a set. But through the cameras it looked real. Wandering around the sets, sitting in the control booth, I was becoming aware of the fabulous potential of this show. What a

wonderful situation to find myself in.

Sunday morning Bank Holiday confusion on the studio floor. Andrew Morgan was down there. 'Let's start please, Tony. Go, go.' 'I don't think he's got his earpiece in,' said someone in the control room. 'Whose air hose is this?' asked someone else. There was the ringing of dropped pipes. 'The door at the back ought to be shut, Tony.' 'Dave, Roger, would you like to look at the blue and see if it's on the right axis? Is it too dense?' 'It's much too dense.'

Kate O'Mara lifted a machine panel. 'Jesus wept.' It was heavy. We could see a giant red brain glowing on a raised ramp. I seemed to recall that John had suggested this brain, way back in the first rewrite conferences we had had with Pip and Jane. I believe he'd said something like, 'What we need in this story is a giant brain. They're getting all these geniuses and sucking their intelligence into a giant brain.' And there it was.

Sylvester was shaking his arms to warm up. There was excitement and colour and movement on the screen. The red light came on outside the door. Running up to record. 'Relax and enjoy it,' said Andrew Morgan. 'A good note,' said Kate.

Andrew bit savagely into an apple as we waited for the special effects to be rigged for the third time. 'Jesus, this just isn't fair, mate.' Then, suddenly, it was a take. The scene sizzled. It was a revelation the way everyone woke up when the scene worked. 'We really must watch those booms, loves.'

Voices in the control room. 'Am I vibrating?' asked Sylvester. 'Sylvester's vibrating, yeah?' 'Just slowly.' 'If this was on the other way around, I could vibrate properly,' said Sylvester. Down in the studio, he lifted up his bum so Jo Newbery could slide his copy of the **Observer** out of sight under it. They closed the door of the cabinet and Sylvester vibrated wildly inside it, wearing a modified pair of earphones that were, according to the script, sucking out his brain impulses. Sylvester stopped vibrating. 'Bless me father, for I have sinned,' he said, suddenly equating the cabinet with a confessional booth. 'This may be the most ridiculous thing I have ever been asked to do.' Up in the control room, John murmured, 'You ain't seen nothing yet.'

John Nathan-Turner was a pillar of strength, when you consider the stress he was under. He had been flying up to Birmingham to see his father who had had a stroke while trying to escape from hospital after minor surgery ('He made a bid for freedom,' said Kate Easteal). His father had knocked down two nurses and a security guard before they could subdue him. Now he was paralysed. And John's mother was on the verge of the latest in a series of nervous breakdowns.

As I looked at Sylvester on the screen in the control room, I had the feeling that **Doctor Who** was entering a golden age. I was watching and

learning, things coming together in my head. I was thinking about my idea for a TV series, 'R O Bott'.

We finished our studio work on Sunday on schedule and that made a tremendous difference to morale – at least to my morale. 'Is that the last shot with us?' 'It could be.' Donald Pickering was not at his happiest. But then he was being asked to roll down stairs in green make-up. Kate O'Mara was holding some prop, saying, 'What do I do with this? I daren't put it under my arm, dare I?' 'Give it to Urak,' said Andrew. 'Poor doll, he's got claws,' said Kate sympathetically. 'Will he be able to take it?'

We had lost 16 minutes of video effects footage – colour separation overlay for the viewing screen – which had been wiped by some idiot in the basement that morning. The fun just kept on coming. 'Boom well in,' said Andrew. Everything was slowing down. It was like quicksand. I was almost falling asleep in the quiet drowsy warmth of the control room. At that moment, I was glad I was not Andrew Morgan: the pressure would have killed me. No one had told him about the colour separation overlay yet.

Half asleep, I felt drowsily drawn to Kate Eastel, who was sitting in the chair in front of me. Kate was lovely, and sexy. I was feeling a certain erotic yearning for her there in the control room darkness. On the monitor Kate O'Mara was saying, 'Is it possible to get in a position where I don't have to kick you so hard? I'm terribly worried about hurting you, Donald.' 'It's all right, darling,' said Pickering. Dave Chapman and Anne Faggetter, the production associate, were in an adjacent control room discussing the lost CSO footage. The film **Waterloo** was playing on a light man's monitor. 'I saw this in 1970, Leicester Square.' 'Was it better then?' 'It was wider.'

The pattern of lights on the lighting control board flickered like a night sky, like a constellation, like a **Doctor Who** special effect. Geoff Powell had scripts on the brain. Literally. It was Tuesday, the third day of the last studio of *Time and the Rani*. It was also the birthday of my girlfriend Kate Druce. I sat in the corner of her bedroom while she knelt on the floor, unwrapping some of the presents I had given her. A green H. R. Giger poster. A Halo Jones T-shirt. Looking at the simple joy on Kate's face I felt happy in every corner of myself.

Back at the studio, the cavalcade of Kates continued, with Kate O'Mara standing in front of a gleaming red brain the size of a small elephant (I love this show!). Geoff, who had designed the brain, was getting angry because people kept leaving their scripts on it. I guess it was so big it was like a table or something.

My girlfriend Kate Druce came out to the TVC restaurant to meet me for a birthday lunch. We kissed in the ring road. 'I'm in a jazzy, smashing, rip-

roaring mood,’ said Kate. ‘I’m in my flying and drinking and drinking and driving mood.’ I showed her around the studio. The special effects men loved her. Colin Mapson made the veins on the giant brain thrash just for her. One of Colin’s visual effects assistants, Mike Tucker, animated the animatronic Tetrap’s head so it stuck its tongue out and Kate saucily tongue kissed it.

Pip and Jane Baker were there. My girlfriend Kate knew the story of the conflict over the script between me and Jane, and I thought Kate might beat her up in the control room. But Kate (Kate One) behaved herself. Meanwhile Kate Easteal (Kate Two) said, ‘I’m going to have a word with the non-speaking Tetrap.’ Then she went to drool over the non-speaking Lakertyan. I went to watch them set the charges to blow up the giant brain and listened to Kate O’Mara (Kate Three) cursing when she fluffed a line – something that seldom happened. Sylv was holding up his whirring electric hand-fan for her. ‘That fucker gave me the wrong fucking cue,’ said Kate Three.

The brain gantry – a platform in the air, red and smoky, huge brain seething – was taking on the aspect of a haunted house for the actors. Sylv freaked in mid-line. ‘Someone’s talking!’ he shouted, ‘I heard them!’ Tension was high here on the tower of the giant red brain on this, our last night of shooting.

We got the shot. We blew up the brain. We finished the show. With the help of Mike Tucker and a giant metal BBC ladder, I almost wiped out a bank of lights in the process of filching one of Geoff’s magnificent dragon heads. If we hadn’t rescued it, it would just have ended up in the trash. We got it down safely. I went for a drink in the BBC Club. John Nathan-Turner rolled his eyes in amused tolerance when he saw the giant shape wrapped in a black bin liner. My souvenir. ‘What’s that, then?’ he asked archly. Taxi back to Kate Druce’s. The taxi driver thought the dragon’s head was great. He reminisced about **Doctor Who** as we drove through the empty night streets. When he was a kid, it worried him a lot when the Cybermen turned to foam. He went to the cinema to see the first movie with Peter Cushing in it, and all over the cinema parents were having to explain the recasting of the Doctor to their kids who were saying, ‘That’s not him. That’s not the Doctor.’

Kate opened the door and I stood there with this giant dragon’s head, a grey black serpent skull carved out of foam packing, with tubes for eyes. It looked like something dreamt up by H. R. Giger or Ian Miller. (The dragon’s head would preside proudly over the hallway in our basement flat in Baron’s Court for years to come, precariously hanging by its bracket from a gas pipe.)

The following day I was at the office and my sister’s friend Kelly Maxwell, over from Canada bearing birthday presents, came in. Kelly had a

yellow jumpsuit and yellow eye make-up. I took her to lunch at Television Centre, then down to Studio Two to see the mammoth sets from *Time and the Rani*. But in Studio Two the floors were gleaming. The giant room was completely bare. Everything had already gone, like a dream on waking. The doors were open at the far end. Sunlight and green trees.

Wednesday 27 May 1987. There was an article about Sylvester in the latest issue of **Starlog**, an American science fiction magazine. What will his Doctor be like? 'He'll be a little smaller,' McCoy predicts.

My girlfriend Kate had taken her last sociology exam that day, and she dropped into my office, where I was talking to Ian Briggs, bearing a bottle of champagne. I got a bunch of blue and white striped paper cups from the BBC canteen. Kate took off a pair of worn-out socks and threw them in the bin in my office. I took them out of the bin and put them in the filing cabinet drawer with all the drafts of Pip and Jane Baker's script.

We diplomatically closed the office door so the sound of champagne corks couldn't be heard across the corridor where they were busy with pre-production matters. I poured blue and white striped paper cups full of champagne from the foaming bottle for Kate and myself and Ian Briggs. We proceeded to get drunk in celebration. I wrote a new label for the filing cabinet drawer: 'Pip and Jane and Dirty Socks'.

Two months later, John Nathan-Turner and I were sitting in the plush office of Jonathan Powell, watching the first episode of the new season of **Doctor Who**. I wasn't worried. I was beyond caring. I hadn't had any breakfast and was just concerned about my stomach rumbling while I was sitting on this smart white sofa. After the screening, Jonathan Powell said, 'Great hat. I like the hat.' He was referring to Sylvester's new headgear.

The next week, I took a day off from my holiday in Kent to come up to London for the press launch of the new **Doctor Who** season at BAFTA ('Naffta', John Nathan-Turner called it) in Piccadilly. I walked in and Kate Eastal and John stared at me in astonishment. I'd had a haircut and was wearing a suit and tie. Sylvester patted me on the shoulder and told me about his canal holiday. Andrew Morgan bought me an orange juice. Then we sat down in the screening room with the press. The lights went out and *Time and the Rani* started, the sluggish story limping across the screen. After the screening, there were pizza and drinks for the press. A guy in a leather jacket scooped up a few quick slices of pizza, then left. 'That's **Time Out** off,' said Kate. London's trendy weekly magazine wasn't ever going to be a fan of *Time and the Rani*. In fact, it was hard to imagine anyone who would be.

Bonnie Langford was talking to the press about Michael Grade. 'He



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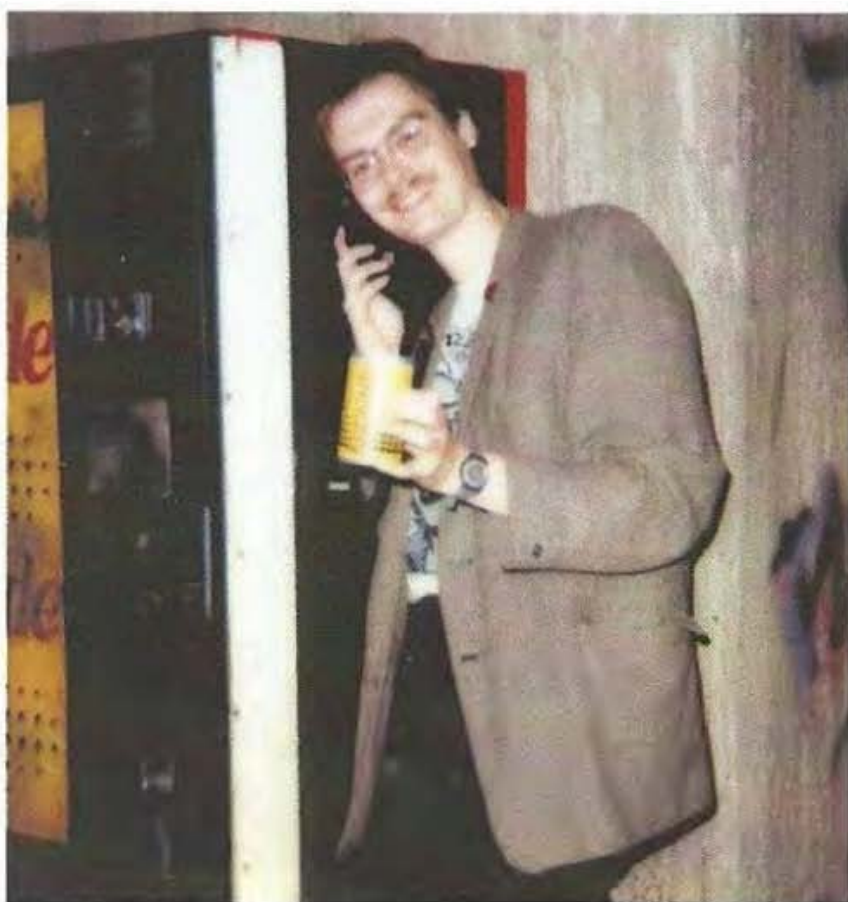
C`Time and the Rani



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Above, right: 9 0 ; O / ;)` 00` 0` ` p2);P` O P 0/` ŷ < ;`



Photographs courtesy of Kate Bruce

Above, left: Me pretending to use the drinks machine telephone on the set of *Paradise Towers*

Above, right: Bonnie Langford, Stephen Wyatt and myself in front of a TARDIS spattered with Red Kang graffiti. My t-shirt is **Life in Hell** — a comic created by Matt Groening, still some years before he invented **The Simpsons**. Don't say I wasn't there first.)



Photographs courtesy of Kate Bruce

Stephen Wyatt and the lovely Catherine Cusack in the studio for *Paradise Towers*



Me in the marvellous Bannerman spacecraft designed by John Asbridge,
from *Delta and the Bannermen*



Kate Easteal and Sara Griffiths on the party set
for *Delta and the Bannermen*



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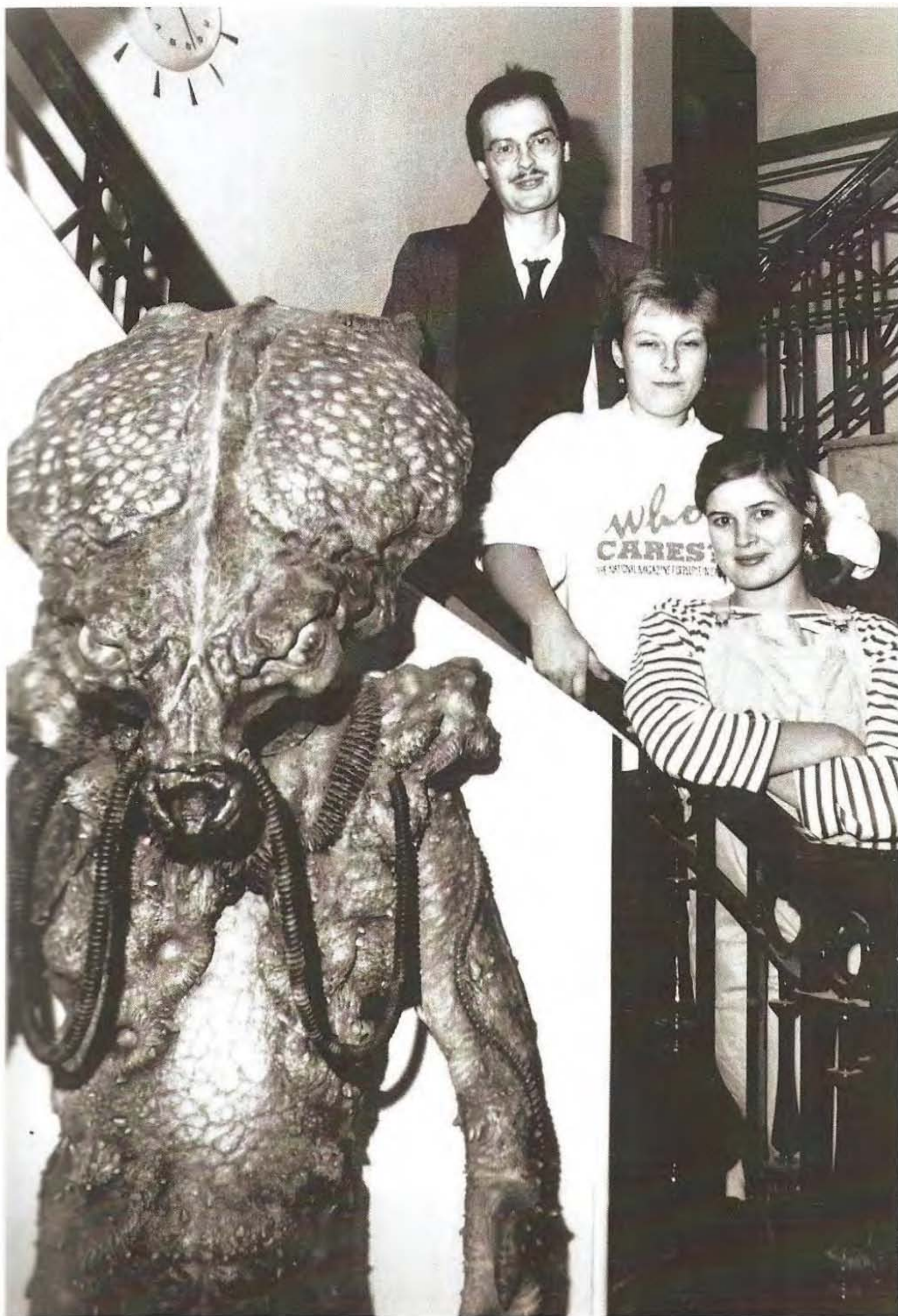
Don Henderson as Gavrok being mean to Bonnie Langford
as Mel on location for *Delta and the Bannermen*



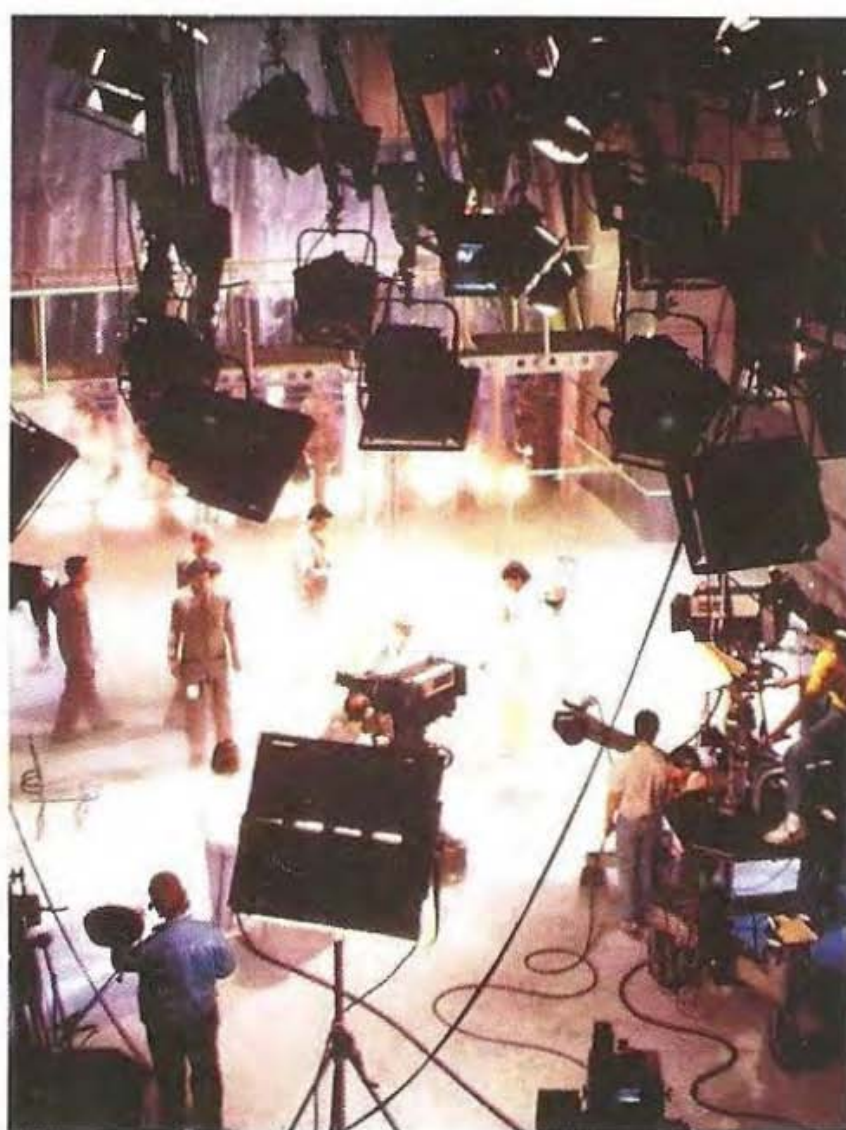
Sylvester and Sara Griffiths on location
for *Delta and the Bannermen*



Malcolm Kohll, Kate Easteal and myself on location for *Delta and the Bannermen*. We are in a holiday camp and Kate is riding a giant rabbit, one of the surreal playground attractions there



Me, looking rather goofy, at the Acton Rehearsal Rooms with Susie Brazier (a visiting friend) and Sophie Aldred, plus the creature from *Dragonfire*



Above, left: Myself and Leslie Meadows as the Dragon in *Dragonfire*. My T-shirt reads "Nuclear war? There goes my career!"

Above, right: In the studio for *Dragonfire*



Above, left: Sophie having her first promotional picture taken as Ace

Above, right: Tony Selby as Glitz on the set of *Dragonfire*

gets all the flak, poor soul.'

What a shame that we had to start a new season, and a new Doctor, with this story.

Monday 7 September 1987. The first episode of the new series of **Doctor Who** was broadcast. The following day, an agent rings me up to hassle me about the episode. 'I thought you were one of the good guys,' she said. 'How could you inflict that on us?' I was depressed enough as it was.

My girlfriend and I watched the episode in bed, gazing at on an old black and white TV perched on a chair. Pip and Jane's dialogue echoed in the autumn night. 'It's very wordy,' said Kate. 'They use pretentious words like "persona".' She put her head on my shoulder as the credits came up. 'Script editor,' she said.

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Paradise Tower*
The first of a four-part
adventure by STEPHEN WYATT
Andrew meets a lot of
Kangs. Which Kangs are best
remains to be seen.

Yellow Kang.....ASTRA SHERIDAN
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Young Caretaker

Bin Liner.....JOSEPH YOUNG
Annabel.....ANNABEL YURESHA
Fire Escape.....JULIE BRENNON
Blue Kang Leader

CATHERINE CUSASK
Deputy Chief Caretaker

CLIVE MERRISON
Tilda.....BRENDA BRUCE
Tabby.....ELIZABETH SPRIGGS
Pex.....HOWARD COOKE
Chief Caretaker

RICHARD BRIERS
Theme music composed by
RON GRAINGER

Theme arrangement and incidental
music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Costume designer JANET HARRY

Script editor ANDREW CARMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MAILETT

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Paradise Tower*
The second of a four-part
adventure by STEPHEN WYATT
The caretakers are all too
young, the lighting's too
bright. We may never find
out which Kangs are best.
Chief Caretaker

RICHARD BRIERS
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Deputy Chief Caretaker

CLIVE MERRISON
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Pex.....HOWARD COOKE
Fire Escape.....JULIE BRENNON
Bin Liner.....ANNABEL YURESHA
Blue Kang Leader

CATHERINE CUSASK
Tabby.....ELIZABETH SPRIGGS
Tilda.....BRENDA BRUCE
Maddy.....JUDY CORNWELL

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Make up designer SHAUNNA HARRISON

Script editor ANDREW CARMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MAILETT

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Paradise Tower*
The third of a four-part
adventure by STEPHEN WYATT
Richard Briers is playing it
his own way. But we may
finally have discovered which
Kangs are best.

Tabby.....ELIZABETH SPRIGGS
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Tilda.....BRENDA BRUCE
Deputy Chief Caretaker

CLIVE MERRISON
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Bin Liner.....ANNABEL YURESHA
Fire Escape.....JULIE BRENNON
Pex.....HOWARD COOKE
Chief Caretaker

RICHARD BRIERS
Maddy.....JUDY CORNWELL
Blue Kang Leader

CATHERINE CUSASK
Video commentary

SIMON COADY

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Visual effects designer

SIMON TAYLER

Script editor ANDREW CARMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MAILETT

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Paradise Tower*
The last of a four-part
adventure by STEPHEN WYATT
RED KANGS! RED
KANGS! RED KANGS
ARE BEST!
Chief Caretaker

RICHARD BRIERS
Bin Liner.....ANNABEL YURESHA
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Fire Escape.....JULIE BRENNON
Blue Kang Leader

CATHERINE CUSASK
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Pex.....HOWARD COOKE
Deputy Chief Caretaker

CLIVE MERRISON
Maddy.....JUDY CORNWELL

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Lighting HARRY BARBER

Script editor ANDREW CARMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MAILETT

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 4

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Which corridor are we in now?

When one door closes, another one opens. As I closed the door of 312 Union House on Pip and Jane Baker after a particularly depressing meeting, I stepped through into my office where *Paradise Towers* author Stephen Wyatt was waiting.

Seeing Stephen cheered me up. I had been chuckling aloud, sitting in this cold office, scarf tucked into my sweater, when I first sat reading the script for his television play **Claws**. I promptly invited him in and took him out to the Bush Hotel Bar where we sat in a corner discussing his **Doctor Who** storyline. 'I'm busking madly!' he said.

Friday 30 January I rang Stephen to check on the spelling of his name; it was about to be typed on a commissioning brief. The following Monday, I dropped in on him in his office at the Script Unit. (The Script Unit was a wonderful organisation dedicated to finding and nurturing new writing talent. I hope I don't sound too cynical when I say naturally it's now gone.) I bestowed the news that he was being commissioned to do an episode of **Doctor Who** – with the deadline only a fortnight away.

'Oh shit!' he cried. 'Oh fuck!'

'Don't panic, Stephen.'

'I like to get myself panicking out of the way at an early stage,' said Stephen, and began to pace.

A week later, he dropped in and delivered his first draft of the first episode. He left me to read it on my own. I sat turning the pages and laughing aloud, all alone there in the early morning BBC corridors.

On Tuesday 6 February (the day of the first *Strange Matter* production meeting), John Nathan-Turner gave me the thumbs-up for Stephen's script, which was the best news in a long time. But it would still be a rather rocky road. Two weeks later, John was on the phone to Stephen at the Script Unit. 'Hello, dear,' he said, and proceeded to rake Stephen over the coals, in a humane and good-humoured way. I felt somewhat betrayed by my new writer because I had told him in confidence that Sylvester McCoy was going to be the new Doctor and then reportedly he'd told half the Script Unit. Of course, I should have kept my mouth shut, so I was also a bit of the shit, because this was big news, valuable publicity, and it was supposed to have been kept under wraps until the correct moment.

I went through Stephen's script, which was excellent, with John, talking about the technical limitations of the show and what was achievable in terms of special effects with our budget and our resources. He talked about the pacing of a chase scene involving a robot cleaner in the high-rise block and

the need to keep the people moving slowly enough for the robot to give convincing pursuit. 'Having worked with robots before...' said John.

Monday 16 March » • ,As the tribulations of the first story continued, my little ray of sunshine was to read episodes three and four of Stephen's script. 'He smiles as only a zombie can,' read one of the scene directions. A few days later, John and Stephen and I sat down to have a script conference. John was concerned about the little old ladies in *Paradise Towers* who are cannibals. 'You realise that they're also lesbians,' said Stephen.

I continued working with Stephen on the script in my office. 'We could do the scene that way,' said Stephen. 'That would make it more – let me see if I'm using this correctly... *muscular*.' He was taking the piss out of my script editor's jargon. You could tell when my script conferences were going well by the demonic laughter echoing down the hallway of Union House.

Frances Graham, the production assistant on Stephen's story, didn't love me any more. That was putting it mildly. I had asked her to photocopy some scripts. She refused. Then, manifesting an admirable survival instinct, she darted to the producer's elbow just as I was about to lodge a complaint. She ended up photocopying the scripts, but she didn't love me any more.

That Friday, Stephen and John and I went out to the pub with Nick Mallett, who was going to direct *Paradise Towers*. Back at the **Doctor Who** office, Kate Eastal said, 'I'm actually going to read Stephen's episode two. I never felt any urge to read Pip and Jane's.'

The following Tuesday, Stephen delivered his episode three and four rewrites and I laughed aloud as I read them. With Malcolm Kohl delivering his episode one of *Delta and the Bannermen* and Ian Briggs about to be commissioned, the season was starting to fall into place. In fact, I'd started worrying about the next season. 'If there is one, and if we're working on it' – the television professional's eternal mantra.

I was worried about finding the writers, getting them into the right frame of mind. 'You're a very cunning taskmaster,' said Stephen, 'I'm sure you can draw these things out of people.' He volunteered to work with me again next season.

Friday 3 April 1987. Nick Mallett was conducting casting interviews for *Paradise Towers* across the corridor from my office. Prospective Pexes filing in. Kangs in the tea bar.

I bought a new T-shirt, this one featuring Calculus Cat, with the logo 'Death to television'. I walked into the **Doctor Who** office and Kate looked up at me from her desk and said, "'Death to television!' I love it. I want one.' John was in his office studying a receipt for Patrick Troughton's send off. 'Kate,' he

called, 'That was a very reasonable price for that wake.'

In mid May, *Time and the Rani* still wasn't over. There were still post-production and special effects. I went out to North Acton to the Visual Effects Department to watch Andrew Morgan directing the model shots. I stood in a dark room full of technicians adjusting lights. They couldn't quite achieve what they wanted and shrugged in resignation. 'I'll just have to tell my old mum to turn the brightness up, that's all.'

There was a big red globe of a planet on a stand. The camera was moving back along a track to make the spaceship model appear to fly. The white spray that blazed out of its jets was air brush propellant.

I went wandering around the workshops, looking at stuff being made for future stories. The giant white robotic cleaners for Stephen's were very impressive, rolling smoothly on concealed wheels as if hovering on air. There was a tiny white crab model of the swimming pool monster, also from *Paradise Towers*.

John came into the office with his parents' dog, Pepsi. Because of the recent tragedies in his family, John was going to have to look after Pepsi. 'The cover of the *Radio Times*, dear,' said John and showed me an old yellowing cover from the 1970s featuring a young Pepsi and another pup.

Kate came into the office while I was talking to Stephen Wyatt and read us this brilliant letter from this kid, a 17-year-old **Doctor Who** fan in New Zealand. He described an earthquake that hit when he was at school. 'We were shit scared,' he said. The phone rang halfway through Kate's recital and I missed the rest of it. 'You missed the bit where they went out on the playing fields and the ground felt like jelly,' said Stephen.

I had just finished the 'Notes for New Writers', which I had started to write months earlier, when I first joined **Doctor Who**. We desperately needed this, to send out with all the mountain of unsuitable, unworkable (indeed, frequently near-psychotic) story material we had to return to the fans, before it buried us alive. I burst into laughter as I proofread it. Kate Eastal had typed it and at the bottom of the list of things hopeful writers must do she'd added 'PS Bugger off'.

John had put a yellow Post-it note on the 'Notes for New Writers'. It read 'Excellent'. I felt quite proud. Invigorated, I set about clearing the office of six months' accumulation of slush-pile scripts and correspondence. In many ways the American fans were the most memorable: 'I am interested in submitting a plot/ story for the **Doctor Who** series and I would therefore like to know your specific operating parameters in detail.'

Kate Eastal poked her head in the door. 'Do you want anything from the tea bar?' she asked. 'Or are you waiting for the substantial finger food?'

The substantial finger food was at Nick Mallett's get-together above Albertine's wine bar. This was a practice peculiar to Nick as a director, where the cast and the production people got to know each other over copious free wine. What a great idea. I get to meet all the Kangs. 'Kang' was a conflation of 'Kid Gang' and they were futuristic female juvenile delinquents who inhabited the decayed urban wasteland of Stephen's high-rise story. Stephen wittily gave them names to reflect their environment. One blonde girl was Annabel Yuresha, better known as the Red Kang called Bin Liner: 'My boyfriend thinks it's a perfect name for me.' Fire Escape couldn't make it.

There was Astra Sheridan, who played the non-speaking Yellow Kang. She had a fascinating dark stain streaking out from the brown iris of her right eye. Her character got killed in episode one. There was Catherine Cusack, the Blue Kang Leader, wearing a purple dress. 'Cusack as in...?' 'I'm afraid so.' I liked her immediately.

Clive Merrison, the Deputy Chief Caretaker, was reminiscing about stealing knickers and flying them from the flagpole over Lime Grove in the golden days of **Doctor Who**. Stephen was talking to Richard Briers (the Chief Caretaker) at length. Everyone was drunk. All the heterosexual actors had got Annabel in a corner. I was complacently in love with my girlfriend, so I left them to it. Kate Easteal was pissed and red faced and laughing. I really liked Kate. She had apparently mooned an entire army convoy coming back from Tonbridge Wells the previous weekend.

The morning following this debauch I overslept. When I woke up, I just knew I was going to be late for the read-through in North Acton. I missed the tube by a matter of seconds and was left standing on the platform at White City, fighting off despair. I was going to be late. It was crucial that I get to the read-through but I was going to be late. Another train pulled in. And terminated. I was going to be late. I was grinding my teeth. Another train pulled in and I got on board and sitting at the other end of the carriage was Sylvester with his Sylvester and Tweety Pie briefcase, studying his script. 'I'm so relieved to see you,' I said, sitting down beside him. I could stop worrying. If I walked in late, I walked in with the star.

At the read-through there were unexpected pleasures. I had known Stephen's script was good, but there were moments of dramatic chemistry which I hadn't anticipated. The read-through was a wonderful success. Gales of laughter at the funny bits. The Rezzies (elderly female residents in the high-rise slum, played by Liz Spriggs and Brenda Bruce) imperiously tore out the superfluous script pages when I told them these had been dropped from the new draft. Nick was wearing a terrific suit and tie. Stephen had changed his earring especially for the occasion.

(looked at these pretty young girls who were playing the Kangs and I began to realise how easy it was in this business just to shag your brains out.

There was a real buzz to this read-through. Excitement.

The next day, we had the run-through, also at North Acton. We began to see what the story was like with some blocking of physical action for the actors.

Nick Mallett moved like a dancer, snapping his fingers softly to punctuate a scene. I believe he used to be a dancer, actually.

After the run-through, I met Mike Tucker for lunch in the canteen above the Rehearsal Rooms and he gave me a load of photos from the last studio (the *Time and the Rani* shoot). I sat with the Kangs (Catherine Cusack, Annabel, Julie Brennon) and Sylvester and looked through the photos.

Friday 22 May x w There was a rain smell of spring as I walked to the tube. Smell of flowers on the circular road at Television Centre. The guard on the gate said good morning. Soon I was passing traffic roundabouts, walls of green, endless beautiful green trees, big houses. We were in Chalfont St Giles. Stephen and I went in a chauffeur-driven car with Judy Cornwell (guest-starring as Maddy), going out to an Iraqi millionaire's mansion where we were shooting the swimming pool sequences for *Paradise Towers*.

Clive Merrison was already there, sitting in a parked car. He told Stephen that the Tricycle Theatre had burned down. Stephen was genuinely shocked. 'When?' 'Last night. This morning. Now.'

The house was amazing. Beautiful pink, red, yellow, orange, lavender trees across the shaggy green lawns. There was an incongruous mock-up of an elevator standing in the middle of the overgrown grass. Howard Cooke (Pex) and Bonnie Langford were stepping out of it.

There were black and yellow BBC frogmen standing in the swimming pool. I sat watching them on a monitor. When they rewound the tape, the water in the pool turned purple. The yellow and black robot crab hit the water buzzing, the lights in its eyes flashing on and off.

There was no heat or light or water on in the millionaire's mansion and the only loo available was an outdoor one with a broken lock. The cistern had to be filled with a hose every time it was flushed. Stephen, Sylvester and I were queuing outside when the cistern overflow pipe began to spew water onto the flagstones. Sylvester laughed his maniacal laugh and from inside Catherine Cusack called 'It's not me.'

Between shots, people were milling around. The robot crab lay dripping on a table. Bonnie was shivering in a white bathrobe. The black Blue Kang wandered past. (sat on a sofa with Stephen, surrounded by Kangs,

thinking that we had started all this. Make-up women were busy with spray cans of colour, taking scissors to scrape the bangs of a Blue Kang wig and make it curl. I studied a Kang crossbow. On the monitor Sylvester was shaking hands again in playback.

Outside, the visual effects guys emptied water out of the crab. I asked if the hole in the crab's chest was for anything. 'Oh yes,' they told me. 'A great big fucking tentacle comes whazzing out.'

Kangs moved around in a mirrored bar. There was a hypnotic gleam to the white light bellying on the blue bulge of the swimming pool water. Stephen Wyatt noticed that the Deputy Chief Caretaker's suit was immaculate when it should have been shabby, tatty, stained. From the scanner, we got them to rip an epaulette. There was technical chatter in the scanner darkness as the Kangs came into shot. 'Dave, the extreme Red on the left. Her face is too shiny.'

I wandered through a wood full of bluebells at lunchtime with Stephen, talking BBC politics by the gravel tennis court. The Kang called Fire Escape was scratching her bottom in her red tights. Nick Mallett was discussing a shot, talking in ellipses. 'It's not... When she's... I'll edge back... It'll be okay.' He sat by the swimming pool watching a monitor. There was a microphone lead running into the swimming pool. Everyone moved as they struck the lights and I was caught up in a crowd of Kangs. 'Are you going to be in this shot too, Andrew?' asked Bonnie.

'We have to lose that lamp now, Nigel. What did I do with that Stanley knife?'

Friday 29 May 1987. The performances of the Rezzies were still deemed to be slightly over the top. 'It is a bit eating-the-scenery,' said John Nathan-Turner. It was the run-through for the first studio, and Richard Briers was there, as one of the living dead. Clive Merrison sat reading the **Evening Standard**. Annabel Yuresha was sitting backwards on a chair, her legs wrapped around it, doing things to my brain. Ian Fraser was pretending to be a robot. Catherine Cusack took off her sweater and showed me her James Dean T-shirt (I'm notorious for my T-shirts). Then Annabel got her legs on top of the chair. Bonnie was tied up in a chair of her own, her face covered with a black shawl, squeaking like a rubber mouse. Julie Brennon was slim and tanned and sexy, wearing a **101 Dalmatians** top.

Julie and Catherine and Annabel knelt to mourn their dead compatriot, three faces clustered together, two pale and one deeply tanned. It was a moving moment. Nick Mallett snapped his fingers to end the scene.

Wednesday 3 June 1987. At the Rehearsal Rooms, Bonnie and Sylvester stepped out of an as-yet-non-existent TARDIS, indicated by tape marks on the floor, to confront urban squalor in Paradise Towers. They kicked over some as-

yet-non-existent rubbish and reacted to some ditto rats. Stephen and I turned to each other and simultaneously whispered 'Rats!' Neither of us had anticipated such authentic set dressing.

Clive did a wild double take in his scene with the robots. 'Top that,' said the Rezzies. There was a script in the sink of the Rezzies' makeshift kitchen. 'I've dropped my sausage,' said Liz Spriggs as they mimed the action. The run-through was fun, like a holiday. Stephen watched with fierce interest, his eyes gleaming. He was seeing his story begin to come to life. The word made flesh. Brenda Bruce was screaming into the sink. Kate Easteal stood by a window, quietly watching. 'Flaming Carrot Comics,' said Sylvester, reading my T-shirt before a scene. Between scenes, I talked to Catherine Cusack about T-shirts and the Derby. John Nathan-Turner snapped at me, the first of several such episodes as the season moved on and tension mounted up. It left me feeling sour and angry for the rest of the day.

Thursday 4 June ~ », { 'Will you run to record please.' We were in the studio for the first day of studio shooting on **Doctor Who** serial R) Paradise Towers. Sylvester as the Doctor steps out of the TARDIS into the rubbish of the Fountain of Happiness Square and sees a tall metal pump and he takes off his hat and greets it.

'Oh Doctor,' says Bonnie as Mel. 'Well, you never know, Mel.' This was a pure Sylvester McCoy ad lib, and it's wonderful. The writer, Stephen, instead of asking for it to be taken out, was keen for it to be left in!

We watched the eerie gliding quiet of the cleaner robots. Voices in the control room. 'Strike the TARDIS. Watch the rubbish.' The next shot in the recording order called for *fully practical rats*. The shot description was 'tight on rats moving through rubbish'. Stephen was giggling. 'Don't go down to see the rats without me,' he said.

Sitting there in the control room watching Stephen's story come together, the first of my stories for the show, I was intensely happy. I was thinking of my work and my girlfriend, and I was wonderfully aware of the richness of both areas of my life, the personal and the professional.

Stephen and I went down to the studio floor. 'The rat lady is just coming across.' 'Ooo. Nice tit-for-tats,' said a BBC technician when he saw the cages the lady was carrying. Tit-for-tats being, of course, more rhyming slang.

The light men and the sound men erupted into a tribal argument about trying to position a boom where a light was standing. 'It is the Deputy Chief Caretaker,' said Stephen, alluding to a character in his script who stands as a symbol for moronic rule-besotted bigots everywhere.

One of the banes of our existence on **Doctor Who** was the occasional really troublesome fan. One such person, a 13-year-old whom we'll refer to

by the pseudonym Nigel Feather (apologies to anyone who is actually called Nigel Feather) was a particular thorn in our side at that time. He specialised in being pestering and obnoxious, to the extent that we had a graffito on the notice board in my office that read 'Death to Nigel Feather (13)!' To which Kate Easteal had added 'Back-biting scum'.

Well it turned out that, while we were busy shooting *Paradise Towers*, Nigel Feather had been trying to get into the studio. Kate told us that he had been caught with a forged letter. He had taken the letter we'd sent him saying he couldn't visit the studio, chopped it up, re-typed it and photocopied it. The little fucker.

'Is that a clear for the rats?' The rodent lady took our little furry friends away again. There was a purple neon *lift* sign and arrow against the green-lit set corridor. Sylvester and Bonnie and the Kangs seemed to be having so much fun that I wanted to be there with them. Non-speaking Kangs in the Television Centre Red Assembly (it sounds like something out of Poe, but it's a colour-coded studio tea bar) were being chatted up by BBC lads. There was a succulent honey-skinned extra holding a handbag; 'One of the other Kangs asked me to hold it for her,' she said. Stephen and I were talking about doing a Kang sequel. 'Teenage Hells Angels in Outer Space,' said Stephen, trying a title on for size. 'They meet a monster and instead of being scared they say, "Tell us what we want to know or we rip your tentacles off!"'

Bonnie yawned musically as Henry Barber (the lighting designer) stepped into shot to check the lights. Domestic tat was being added to dress the Rezzies' flat: Flying ducks, seashell ashtrays, purple fluted vases. 'More, more,' said Stephen. I was looking at Annabel's lovely bare Kang arm.

It was going to be a good show and Sylvester was going to be a great Doctor. That much was evident to me already.

Stephen was very concerned that the Caretakers should be suitably seedy looking and slovenly and shambolic. At this point, they still looked too spiffy and well organised. I'd already spoken to John about this once on Stephen's behalf (it was my job to bridge the gap between writer and producer). But still nothing seemed to have been done. The Caretakers looked too much like a crack cadre and not enough like a shower of scruffy losers. Stephen urged me to repeat the observation. So I moved forward in the control room darkness to remind John. He turned to me and snarled, 'Listen. Don't you check on me. I'm the producer.'

I retreated and sat down again, feeling humiliated and angry. That was the second time in two days that John had snapped at me. I was grinding my teeth with rage and doting on notions of revenge: that's the worst mistake he's ever made, and so forth.

‘Are you sulking?’ asked Stephen.

The following day I was still stung and fuming about John’s behaviour. I talked to my landlady, a BBC news producer, about it. I told her my theory as to why it was happening. There’s a story about Stanley Kubrick when he was working on *Spartacus*. Apparently he got along very well with his star, Kirk Douglas, until there was a screening of the work in progress for Howard Fast, who wrote the novel on which the film was based. Fast is supposed to have enthusiastically praised Kubrick’s obvious genius and congratulated Douglas on finding such a talent. Thereafter Douglas took umbrage at the notion that someone else was getting the praise and conceived a bitter dislike of Kubrick. Anyway, that’s how the story goes. And I put myself in a similar position to Kubrick. I assumed that someone had praised John on his script editor and John had reacted Kirk Douglas-fashion.

Looking back with the hindsight of years, though, I suspect there was a more straightforward explanation. The enormous pressure of making the show for John had been compounded by the even more enormous pressure of events in his family (his father’s stroke, his mother’s nervous breakdowns).

Back in the studio on Friday, I avoided John. Down on the studio floor, the door of the Rezzies’ set was being drilled, in preparation for Pex’s entrance and I could hear Bonnie and the Rezzies on the soundtrack reminiscing about dentists. ‘Well, I was a dental nurse,’ said Liz Spriggs.

There was a very effective shock – it shocked me three times – when Pex smashed down the door after the warm lull of Stephen’s dialogue: ‘Make the most of the peace and quiet.’ *Smash*. ‘It’s called dramatic irony, guv,’ said Stephen.

The eerie green lights of the corridor. The robot approaching. ‘Less program on the feed to the robot.’ More fully practical rats. A fully practical caged budgerigar. ‘Andrew, what I want to know is if you’re a fully practical script editor today,’ said Stephen.

The robotic cleaner scooted backwards as the videotape was rewound. The non-speaking Kangs and the non-speaking Caretakers were playing charades in the Red Assembly. A Red Kang touched her arm. ‘Two syllables. First syllable.’ The non-speaking Rezzies remained aloof.

Catherine Cusack showed the other Blue Kangs how to do the hand signs. Blue Kangs handed their crossbows over to the Red Kangs at the end of a take: sharing limited resources. I shanghaied Catherine and took a Polaroid of her gnawing on the dismembered leg of a Yellow Kang. Another snapshot to treasure.

Kangs, rats, what more could I have asked?

A cluster of BBC technicians, strangely silent, intent, concentrating

[illegible]

Richard Briers was reading a copy of **Family Circle**. We were out in North Acton again for a run-through of the second block. Catherine Cusack was wearing glasses and baggy purple trousers, running across the room in a Groucho slouch. At lunch, Stephen, Sylvester and I were sitting out on the balcony of the Rehearsal Rooms restaurant, looking out over a big green graveyard down below. I was eating ice cream: Stephen had his sunglasses on. Sylvester had his own publicity postcards at last, a great photograph of him outside the Iraqi millionaire's empty mansion in Chalfont St Giles (you could see the Iraqi millionaire's bluebells out of focus against the green background). I gave my girlfriend Kate one of the Sylvester postcards. 'Oh, isn't he great?' she said. 'He's a nut.'

Tuesday 16 June N X » 'Nice and nasty please,' said Nick Mallett as the actors got ready to do a run-through in the Rehearsal Rooms. Clive Merrison was reading the **Guardian** while Astra Sheridan screamed at his feet. She was doing her death scene.

'From the top, where Bin Liner's blocking Catherine.' 'Suppose Camera + does the shots 2 was supposed to, until Bin Liner moves?' We were back in the studio. There was a Chaplin silhouette of Sylvester against a window at the end of the corridor. 'Lift the boom,' shouted someone. 'Which corridor are we in now?' asked Bonnie.

'Hold it Cleaners. Wait for your cue.' In the control room, Nick was jumping around in his chair, urging the cleaning robots on. He gave a note to Sylvester about running: 'Like the clappers.' In the studio, there was the smell of Kang perfume, the smell of smoke-gun smoke. I was tired and the motion on the studio floor was dreamlike. A girl in floral trousers was dragging camera cables like an Egyptian slave labouring on the pyramids.

'Has Jeff got it – a single of the Doc, Jeff?' 'Could I just confirm that I do have 1 Ramd + » 'Yes, Jeff.' 'Okay.'

The Doctor lying on the floor, slim Kang legs standing beside him. A red light went on in the control room. 'We are recording.' Sylv fluffed a line ('Audio-architechnotonical') and he started eating the telephone in frustration, 'Ah, fuck it.'

'Nick, Bin Liner's a bit garbled on her, "I can see them through the eye-spy."' Nick's foot was pumping frantically as he sat in the director's chair. 'Build high for happiness, Alex,' said the lighting technician (quoting a catchphrase from the script, which warmed my heart). 'If Clive's on Camera + he'll find it,' said Shirley Coward, the vision mixer. 'There's your camera, Clive boy.'

There was an ashtray on Dave Chapman's special effects console, sitting on top of a five-and-a-half-inch floppy disc, and some liquorice Rizlas.

Down on the studio floor, the Caretakers were dressed in their fascist-militaristic uniforms and Clive (or was it Sylvester?) was singing 'Springtime for Hitler'. Sylvester produced a Penguin edition of G. B. Shaw from his pocket: **The Doctor's Dilemma**. A lovely smile from the Asian Red Kang.

'Fairy feet from Bonnie,' said John Nathan-Turner. 'Light on the trotters,' instructed Nick Mallett, passing on the suggestion. 'Careful on the rostra, Bonnie,' was the way Ian Fraser ultimately phrased it. 'Come with me Bin Liner, Fire Escape and... Air Duct!' said Sylvester, improvising brilliantly (there was no Air Duct in the script). I was watching Catherine Cusack's face, pale Irish beauty.

Thursday 18 June 1987. There was a chalkboard above the winch control panel with 'Elvis is King' written on it. We were rehearsing. Bin Liner was without her red Kang wig, so she was Annabel with her long lank blonde hair. In the control room, all the screens suddenly go blank. 'System fault.'

Shirley the vision mixer hooted with laughter as the robotic Cleaner jammed its phallic drill bit at the lift doors. Clive's black and white image from a screen was reflected in John metallic Garfield briefcase on the control room floor. Bonnie, in a big floppy T-shirt, was wandering along a blue-lit corridor between the large robots.

Tension and excitement after lunch. 'Strike clock. Cue robot.' We were shooting again. One of the extras, a Caretaker, hadn't come back from lunch. There was the possibility of panic in the air. 'We'll do 262. He isn't in that one.' Perhaps he's lying at the bottom of a lift,' said Stephen.

'The over the shoulder 249 is very wide isn't it?' 'I've tightened up.' 'Thank you.' As we sat there watching this story being shot, Anne Faggetter was behind us in the producer's booth watching the rough tapes of the previous story. Down on the studio floor, a chair began to fall apart under Sylvester, who leapt up and attacked it. Attacked it, smashed it to bits, knelt and mimed playing the harp with the remains of it, like Harpo Marx. Bonnie was being wonderful with the disabled children who were visiting the studio, sitting watching in their wheelchairs.

'We've got non-smoking robots.' 'Oh, I think we can have smoking ones.' Red and blue lights hung above were casting strange red and blue shadows around the outlines of everything on the studio floor. It made it look like something out of a 3D comic book. 'Okay. Nearly there. From the top. Opening positions,' said Nick. 'Can you go back to the first condition, please?' John's cigarettes were poisoning everyone in the control room as he chain-smoked.

Friday 19 June 1987. 'That was the crassest line in the script,' said Stephen, listening to some of his own dialogue – 'A monster that makes camp

jokes.' Rich Briers wandered around in his Kroagnon outfit, looking like a sort of **Wizard of Oz** Nazi. 'The best-dressed-zombie competition,' said Stephen. Sylv did an acrobatic tumble out of camera shot. 'What a good fall. Nobody saw it,' he said. He fluffed a line and smacked his head against the wall.

We were showing around an American **Doctor Who** fan who was visiting the studio. He was called Zachary ('That's what they call me on the convention circuit'). Chatter from the studio floor: 'Somebody's whistling.' 'They are.' 'It's the robot arms.' 'We need a practical crossbow and a lightweight bolt.' 'Too much chat going on please!' shouted Ian. 'And in the room there!'

Henry Barber said, 'No. The tube goes up and Kroagnon comes out of it.' Julie Brennon was cackling her wicked laugh as the tube descended on Richard Briers. It was Friday, the last few hours in the studio for this story. There was a combination of extreme tension and end-of-term euphoria in the air. Ian Fraser shouted 'Fire Liner!' accidentally gene splicing Fire Escape and Bin Liner. I was sitting with Sylvester in the Red Assembly, flirting with the Kangs.

'Cue the lift doors and out you come, Cleaner.' Nick raced between the studio floor and the control room. 'Do the next one please: "Hungry, hungry."' 'That's two sets of carts and Rezzies' legs, red light, smoke, spooky robots.' I sat with Stephen in the dark control room, realising that this was the culmination of months of our work.

Red Kangs in a corridor jumped involuntarily as an explosion went off on the other side of the studio. Freeze frame of Catherine Cusack triumphantly throwing a hubcap from a wrecked robot.

'Sorry, so sorry to stop,' said Richard Briers. 'Isn't it better to have just one "hungry" each time?'

Afterwards, with the last shot complete, I bought a weary Nick Mallett a drink in the BBC Club. He wanted Perrier water. One of the Kangs and I were together in the crush of people at the bar. 'What about this girlfriend of yours then?' she said. 'We're like everyone else,' I said. 'We have periods when we get along really well, we have periods when we don't get along.' 'Well, when you're having a period when you're not getting along,' she said, 'why don't you ring me up. And do anything else you want with me.' A certain amount of Kang-snogging then ensued in the BBC Television Centre lift. A nice, deliberate kiss.

Back in the BBC Club, standing drinking vodka and tonics in the crowded bar. Kate Easteal was chatting with Catherine Cusack. She asked Catherine what she was doing next. '*Sophia and Fuckface*,' said Catherine, 'And I'm Fuckface. The young Fuckface.' (I believe Catherine was referring here,

perhaps a tad disrespectfully, to *Sophia and Constance* from that acknowledged literary masterpiece **The Old Wives' Tale** by Arnold Bennett. The following week, I would see piles of boxes in Threshold House containing *Sophia and Constance* scripts and think of young Cusack and smile.) Catherine was drunk and young and attractively left wing, claiming she found the elderly prime minister of Russia rather sexy: 'Every time I see Gorbachev on the television, that mark on his head, I just about have a bloody orgasm,' she said. 'Tell us about it,' said Kate Easteal.

Down in the lobby of Television Centre, waiting for taxis. Catherine said I could call her Catta and I felt privileged. Her cab arrived and she hugged me and Kate goodbye, and then she was gone. Kate and I sat there, staring up at the brilliantly lit, intricate Television Centre ceiling. 'This is a bad ceiling to look at when you're drunk,' said Kate.

It was now the early hours of Saturday morning and *Paradise Towers* was in the can. I rode home in a taxi with a Kang crossbow in a plastic bag.

Thursday 20 August 1987. Stephen and I were reminiscing about the writing of *Paradise Towers*. Stephen said, 'There is an optimum time for writing. I think actually three scripts in a week is pushing it.' We were watching rough tapes of *Paradise Towers* episodes one to four and it was impossible to be objective, particularly about the geographical relationships of the set. You have these two corridors which are supposed to be miles apart in a huge skyscraper complex, but we *knew* they were next to each other in the studio. Stephen was wearing shorts and sandals. Graeme Curry and Ben Aaronovitch were watching with us, to try and get a feel for Sylvester, and it was great to have the reaction of an audience. Kate Easteal was looking for her keys in her **Thomas the Tank Engine** satchel. I then sneaked out of the building to avoid Pip and Jane.

Thursday 10 September 1987. We had a viewing with Colin Rogers, and we convinced John to scrap the less than inspired David Snell music for *Paradise Towers*. I felt strongly about this because to my mind the score was somewhat dreary synthesiser stuff that didn't work to help any scene. Indeed, I often felt it was working *against* them. So Keff McCulloch got to rescore it. Thank God. Colin liked Stephen's scripts. He speculated that there'd soon be girls playing Kangs in playgrounds all over the country. 'Shouting "Make her un-alive!"' said John.

Monday 28 September 1987. I heard that John Nathan-Turner had been breaking out over tapes. The technical fuck ups were quite unbelievable. *Paradise Towers* had been dubbed back again but it still had the wrong music, and people in presentation had borrowed Pip and Jane's latest episode – to be

broadcast that evening – and damaged it. And there was still a hole in the soundtrack.

There was an **Open Air** discussion of **Doctor Who** the next day, and I'd selected a nice Kang clip for them to use: 'Boys? What are boys?' says Annabel Yuresha as Bin Liner.

Tuesday 29 September 1987. John and Sylvester and Bonnie were on television up in Manchester, on **Open Air**, in the firing line. Apparently the woman M. C. had the knife out for them and for **Doctor Who**. She sprung a **Daily Telegraph** article on them (or maybe it was the **Express**) which had singled Sylvester out as 'Wally of the Week'. She read a couple of paragraphs of abusive prose then looked across at Sylvester. Sylvester grinned happily and launched into a fantastically agile and good-naturedly diplomatic reply starting with the words, 'Well, I never read the newspapers, but...'.

Thursday 1 October 1987. Stephen was telling me about his television play **Claws**, a well-written black comedy about the intrigues and machinations and treachery among breeders of pure-bred cats. I had read **Claws** months earlier and it was one of the reasons I had hired Stephen. It had now been filmed and was going out that Sunday. Unlike the first **Doctor Who** story, it had also had a successful press showing. Apparently publications right across the political spectrum had given it a favourable response. 'If both **City Limits** and the **Daily Mail** think it's a boffo wheeze, we must be onto something good,' said Stephen.

A few days later, I was with John and he was talking about the good old days of Christmas parties at the BBC. 'They were spectacular... People would screw...' I discussed the reviews of **Claws** with Stephen. We were talking about the **Daily Mail**. 'It's a newspaper for *literate* subhuman fascists,' I said. 'My mother!' said Stephen.

I went to the identity card office to get my photo taken and my BBC identity card renewed. The plastic wafer came out of the camera and burnt my fingers.

A tremendous weight had been lifted off my mind. I wasn't worried any more. The sense of relief was physical and very intense. I hadn't realised it, but three things had been weighing on me. The first thing was simply the stress of production; when we had finished recording the season's stories, I began to feel saner. Then there was the worry of what happened when my contract expired; when the BBC renewed it, I felt better still. The final thing was Pip and Jane's story. For the previous four weeks this had been going out with my name on the credits. I wasn't consciously aware of how clenched and defensive that had made me until the night that the first episode of Stephen's

Tuesday 6 October 1987. We actually received a memo from Jonathan

Powell, congratulating us on *Paradise Towers*. This had never been known to happen before. 'First rate,' said Powell. He knew we were planning to bring back the Daleks the following season, and now he was talking about wanting 'the Daleks at Paradise Towers', which I translated to mean that he didn't want the Daleks on Lakertya (the gravel-pit planet in *Time and the Rani*), which I further translated to mean that he wanted the Stephen Wyatt-style scripts to continue.

Once the music score for *Paradise Towers* had been replaced by the new one composed by Keff McCulloch, John asked me if I wanted to hear episode two, which had just arrived. I politely declined. Then, in my office, I could hear the new music from down the corridor. It drew me into John's office, where I sat down beside a box full of new **Doctor Who** books. Sheer joy. The difference the right music could make to a story was hard to believe. Keff had taken the somewhat overlong Brer Rabbit rulebook scene (where the Doctor fools the Caretakers) and he'd put music at the beginning and the end, no music in the middle, and now it worked. He'd added lyrical music to the scene with the Kangs and the cans of soft drink, evoking exactly the sense of tenderness and communion, the coming together of the Doctor and the Kangs – the quality I'd always wanted the scene to convey. Keff's background was pop music and his stuff was in the happy upbeat pop idiom, but I was confident he'd develop. Already he was showing the instincts of a skilled film composer. Even if you didn't like a particular piece of his music, it was always there for a reason, and always the right reason. He understood the emotions we were trying to convey and he *helped*.

I rang Stephen to tell him the good news. My girlfriend Kate and I went to the theatre with Stephen to see Alan Drury's adaptation of Molière's **The Hypochondriac**. In the seats behind us in the circle, teenage girls were talking and laughing. 'It's the voice of the 1980s,' said Stephen. 'You hear it everywhere. Female, about 20, a little drunk.'

Thursday 8 October 1987. I was going on holiday and I rang up the Netherlands tourist bureau to check whether I'd be able to tape **Doctor Who** okay in Holland. I didn't want to miss an episode. I passed my videotape of *Paradise Towers* through airport security to be hand searched. I read a **Doctor Who** book on the plane. Kate looked over at a photo of some classic **Doctor Who** monsters. 'I remember those geezers.'

Rain sprayed off the wing in a blaze of light. We trundled along the dark, wet runway. Long lines of lights, the dark bulk of our wing cancelling them in sequence as we passed. The cabin lights dimmed. The sudden thunder of engines. We were airborne. Whispery thud of Walkmans up and down the aisles. Violent turbulence over the Channel. American students laughing: 'The

steward guy fell down.’ We crossed the coast of Holland and approached the airport. Coming in for landing. The moon floated past the wing then bounced up like a huge white rubber ball. An American student was saying, ‘I’m confused. Holland’s the country and Amsterdam’s the city?’

I needn’t have worried about the technical questions of taping *Paradise Towers* in the Netherlands. Everything worked fine. Indeed the Red Kangs had red subtitles, the Blue Kangs blue. We watched the show with our friends. It was the second episode of Stephen’s story and I was proud of it. I felt that the history of the show was in the process of changing as it went out.

‘Charming creatures,’ said our friend Mylene as the Kangs taunted Pex.

A week later, when I got back to work in London, Graeme Curry rang to say how much better *Paradise Towers* was than the previous story. Ian Briggs wanted to tell me the same thing, and to pass his congratulations on to Stephen.

Thursday 15 October NW6 Suddenly there was talk of re-editing the knife scene in *Paradise Towers* in the light of another gun massacre (‘A replay of Hungerford,’ said John; *Not Again* bannered the **Daily Mail** headline) and a knife killing (Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary, was about to change the law on the possession of knives). This scene wasn’t in the script. Stephen and I specifically took pains to avoid a knife – the obvious thing to use in the scene – and instead specified sort of bizarre gladiatorial toasting forks. The knife was added over my protest. However, to cut the scene meant losing Stephen’s zinger of a line, ‘Have you seen the basil, Tilda?’ (‘Everybody’s favourite line,’ said John.) In a way, I felt insulated from the whole debate. I had a tape of the original. I was all right.

That night, as I slept, I was vaguely aware of storm sounds outside, the wind rolling some flower pots around in the concrete hollow outside our basement flat. I woke up the following day and heard that there were some trees down. I started walking to work because there were rumours of difficulties on the tube to Hammersmith. But when I got to Hammersmith there were no trains operating from there either. In fact, the station was sealed off with locked metal grids. As I walked the rest of the distance to work I began to realise that it hadn’t been just a storm. It had been a hurricane and London was devastated.

Walking to work was lovely. The street was green with fallen leaves. People were wandering around bewildered and indecisive; they were programmed to commute to work and suddenly they found there was no way of getting there and they didn’t know what to do. Routine had been disrupted and they’d received this little windfall of freedom and they didn’t know what to do with it.

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and foreign sales. The foreign sales cuts seemed an odd decision, since this piece of censorship was in response to a peculiarly English piece of hysteria. And, when I thought about it, the order about repeats was odd too, since this hysteria was also peculiar to this particular moment in history. Oh well.

I was on the phone to a friend who had invited Kate and me over for a meal. 'Sorry Mark, that night we're having dinner with the man who wrote *Paradise Towers*.' 'Ah,' said Mark. 'Ice hot.' A line from the show!

Friday 30 October 1987. The day before Halloween, John Nathan-Turner showed me a very succinct and intelligent letter from a woman who was disturbed by the scene with the kitchen knife in *Paradise Towers*. I agreed with her. This is the scene that Grade was having cut out from all future prints. John Nathan-Turner mentioned that he remembered me registering a complaint when they were shooting the scene. John was good enough to remember it now, although he had ignored me at the time. The joke was that it was John's advice I had been acting on, to avoid violence involving household implements.

After the King's Cross tube station conflagration, Ben Aaronovitch said, 'We couldn't write about guns after Hungerford. We couldn't write about bombs after Enniskillen [the IRA massacre]. And now we can't write about fires.' We actually got a complaint about the bus blowing up in *Delta and the Bannermen* because it was the day after Enniskillen.

Tuesday 24 November 1987. The *Sun* had the headline 'Crossbow Killer Rapes Mum'. I found it very odd that the madman and loathsome sex criminal going berserk with his crossbow hadn't managed to time his fit to coincide with the transmission of *Paradise Towers* which featured the heavy use of crossbows.

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Flight of the Chimeron*
The first of a three-part
adventure by MALCOLM KOHLL

An all-location shoot is
always a good excuse for a
party. Goronwy is far too
keen on bees. Bees make
honey.

Gavrok.....DON HENDERSON
Delta.....BELINDA MAYNE
Chima.....TIM SCOTT
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Toll Master.....KEN DODD
Weismuller.....STUBBY KAYE
Hawk.....MORGAN DEAN
Murray.....JOHNNY DENNIS
Bollit.....ANITA GRAHAM
Adlon.....LESLIE MEADOWS
Keillor.....BRIAN HIBBARD
Burton.....RICHARD DAVIES
Billy.....DAVID KINDER
Ray.....ROBIN ASPLAND
Lorells.....KEFF MCCULLOCH
JUSTIN MYRES, RALPH SALMINS

Vocalists

TRACEY WILSON, JODIE WILSON

Theme music composed by

RON GRANGER

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Costume designer RICHARD CROFT

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer JOHN ASHBIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Flight of the Chimeron*
Part 2 of a three-part
adventure by MALCOLM KOHLL

The new Doctor is really
finding his feet, and the new
companion, Ray, is going to
be a big hit!

Keillor.....BRIAN HIBBARD
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Ray.....ROBIN ASPLAND
Delta.....BELINDA MAYNE
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Gavrok.....DON HENDERSON
Billy.....DAVID KINDER
Vinny.....MARTYN GEPAIN
Baby Chimeron.....

JESSICA MCCOUGH

Goronwy.....HUGH LLOYD
Weismuller.....STUBBY KAYE
Hawk.....MORGAN DEAN
Burton.....RICHARD DAVIES
Murray.....JOHNNY DENNIS
Adlon.....LESLIE MEADOWS
Bollit.....ANITA GRAHAM
Young Chimeron.....

AMY OSBORN

Callon.....CLIVE CONDON

Arrex.....RICHARD MITCHLEY

Vocalists

TRACEY WILSON, JODIE WILSON

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Make up designer GILLIAN THOMAS

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer JOHN ASHBIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

Videos: *Death to the Daleks*

BBCV 4073

The Day of the Daleks, BBCV 82036

The Brain of Morbius, BBCV 62042

are available from retailers

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
with Bonnie Langford
in *The Flight of the Chimeron*
Last part of a three-part
adventure by MALCOLM KOHLL

With the Bannermen
defeated, the Doctor makes a
solemn promise never to
return to Wales ever again.

Gavrok.....DON HENDERSON
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Burton.....RICHARD DAVIES
Callon.....CLIVE CONDON
Arrex.....RICHARD MITCHLEY
Weismuller.....STUBBY KAYE
Hawk.....MORGAN DEAN
Ray.....ROBIN ASPLAND
Goronwy.....HUGH LLOYD
Billy.....DAVID KINDER
Delta.....BELINDA MAYNE
Young Chimeron.....

LAURA COLLINS

Chimeron Princess

CARLEY JOSPER

Vocalists

TRACEY WILSON, JODIE WILSON

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Visual effects Designer ANDY MCVEAN

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer JOHN ASHBIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 5

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Is it a little mutant?

Wednesday 25 March 1987. I was discussing Malcolm Kohll's script with John Nathan-Turner and we decided to expand the initial battle scene. It would now take place not in the studio, in a set of the bridge of Delta's spaceship, but instead on location, in a slate quarry.

'It wouldn't be *Doctor Who* without a slate quarry,' said Malcolm when I told him.

A couple of weeks later, Malcolm dropped in to see how things were proceeding. He'd delivered his second episode and wanted to know what John thought. He waited in my office while John called me in. 'What's happening with Malcolm?' he asked, and right away I knew something was wrong. 'Have you read his episode two yet?' I hadn't. John looked at me and said, 'I think it's the worst script I've ever read.' (Only much later would I wonder if this was some kind of karmic balancing act: being so incredibly negative about poor Malcolm's script because he had been so positive about Ian Briggs's script for *Dragonfire*, against all odds, only the day before). I went back down the corridor to my office where Malcolm was waiting, with a fixed smile. I invented a story. An hour later, just after Malcolm had driven all the way back to Islington, I phoned him and ask him to come in again. I had now had a chance to read the script and I knew what we had to do.

I told Malcolm the truth, that we needed a complete rewrite. I'd now read his script and John was more or less correct. His episode one was fine but two was sort of an episode of lukewarm sitcom, not **Doctor Who** at all. There was very little Doctor in it and almost no incident. But John was more worried than I was. I was confident that we could get Malcolm to rewrite it for us. I asked him if he was willing to try it and when he said yes, that was most of the battle won. I felt like a bastard, but I knew we'd be all right. I thrashed out a new storyline for the episode with Malcolm, then together we went into John's office to run through it for him. When Malcolm ground to a halt at various points, I jumped in to bail him out.

Later, I was walking up to Television Centre with John in the sunshine. He patted me on the shoulder. I'd done a good job in a script emergency. I had convinced him that it was going to be all right, and it was.

The rewrite on Malcolm's script hit on Friday and he worked madly through the weekend on his rewrite. On Sunday evening, I took a train up from Kent, where I'd been belatedly celebrating my birthday (6 April, it fell during the location shoot for *Time and the Rani*), and headed for London to work with Malcolm. I came out of the tube at Highbury and Islington and found all the glass smashed in the door of the phone box. But the phone was

working.

I was standing waiting as Malcolm pulled up in his car outside a Chinese restaurant. My girlfriend Kate had been a trifle miffed that I'd had to cut my weekend short to work on Malcolm's script. 'Very nice, to have a script editor travel up especially to see him,' she had said. 'If he wants to do a **Doctor Who** he's just going to have to learn to get it right.' She'd never worked in television in her life, but she was already starting to sound like the hard-bitten wife of the script editor.

But I was happy to schlepp up to London and sacrifice my Sunday because I wanted to get this right. I loved doing this job. Who would have thought it? Here I was in gleaming dark London, standing under a streetlamp on a spring night, ready to work on a **Doctor Who** script. Avoiding the broken glass on the pavement, waiting by the Chinese restaurant as Malcolm's car arrived.

Ten minutes later, I was sitting in Malcolm's flat with a glass of water. Talking Heads played in the background. Malcolm was standing around nervously while I read his new episode two. I read and chuckle. About ten pages in, I told him to relax. I read the Chinese take-away menus on the wall of Malcolm's kitchen as I dialled Brighton, ringing John up at his home to tell him the script was going to be all right. And it was. Malcolm had been working day and night and he'd written an entire episode in 48 hours. The least I could do was sacrifice my Sunday evening and come back to London early to read the script and let him off the hook.

Malcolm's script was fine. He sagged with relief and smiled and dropped me off at King's Cross station. The surgical glow of Sunday night fluorescent lights. Punks and drunks. I caught the tube from King's Cross. I sat on the tube train, tired and spaced out. It was ten thirty at night. At Edgware Road, the tube doors opened and someone stepped into the carriage. My God, it looked like Ian Briggs — who was writing the other three parts to go with Malcolm's. Briggs too would have spent the weekend slaving on his **Doctor Who** script. Was it him? I got up. I walked past him. I said his name. He looked up. The long stare of disbelief. What I should have done was coolly demand, 'Where's the script Ian?' as if an avenging God had sent me. But that would probably have given him a heart attack. Instead I just explained that I wasn't stalking him and it was a weird coincidence, a piece of synchronicity.

Tuesday 14 April 1987. 'Is it a little mutant? So sweet,' said Kate Easteal, reading Malcolm's script.

Spring in West London. Cherry blossoms falling among the dog turds. Malcolm and I walked along Frithville Gardens, both weightlessly happy. We'd had a meeting that morning with John and Chris Clough, the director for

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down the hall came the sound of singing. They were auditioning Billies while Chris looked at library footage of insect reproduction: 'The sperm emerges as a milky fluid.' Chris was in search of a shot of bees swarming against a clear sky. All in aid of *The Flight of the Chimeron*, as Malcolm's saga was called at that point.

'They were screaming with delight,' said John. The people who had done the computer graphics for the new **Doctor Who** titles were apparently pleased with their work. New titles, new music. If only I had been happy with the script, I felt, then the start of the new season could have been something wonderful.

At the end of the day, Chris was still in my office, crouched in front of the video. Kate Eastal looked in. 'You missed the bit with the scorpions fornicating,' I told her. 'Well, rewind it.' 'We have. Twice.'

Friday, 1 May. I wrote to Bonnie Langford that we'd got Ken Dodd to play the Tollmaster in Malcolm's story. 'And the best part is that we get to kill him.' 'Oh, Andrew!' said Bonnie.

Across the corridor from my office, Gary Downie was choosing leather-boys from **Spotlight** to cast as non-speaking Bannermen. Chris Clough showed me a Polaroid of the wonderful creature for the Dragon in *Dragonfire*, built by visual effects assistant Lindsay MacGowan.

Monday, 1 June. The actress who was supposed to play Ray in Malcolm's story, Lynn Gardner, was practising riding her motor scooter and she crashed. She was all right, but she needed to rest for a couple of weeks. So we needed a new actress with a Welsh accent who could ride a motor scooter.

The following day, on the notepad on my desk I wrote *How often does she ride a scooter?* 'Sounds like a good name for a band,' said Daren, our work experience guy. John was wondering if we could get away with using Lynn despite her injuries, but in the end the part of Ray went to Sara Griffiths and Lynn took a voice role in *Dragonfire*.

In the sound recording studio at Lime Grove, a lovely, soft, warm, clean-carpeted, spacious place, David Kinder was about to perform *Singing the Blues* in the role of Billy. He took a swig of port before going into the microphone booth. 'Brandy's good, too,' said Tracey Wilson. I mentioned that Louis Armstrong used to drink milk to coat his throat. 'But milk congests you,' said Tracey. The drummer got interested, took off his headphones and joined in the conversation about dairy products and congestion. I loved that studio. Carpet and pale wood. In the control room suite, there were more buttons than you've ever seen in your life. More than in the TARDIS. Keff McCulloch, who was composing the music for this story, strummed his white electric guitar and a

warm full sound filled the studio. David Kinder sang in a trembly Buddy Holly voice. 'He's got a 50s voice.'

Saturday 20 June 1987. I travelled on the tube to North Acton in the morning. It was the first genuine day of summer, beautiful and hot.

Only a few hours earlier, we had been in the studio, wrapping up *Paradise Towers*. And even fewer hours before, we had been in the BBC Club celebrating. Now we were back at the Rehearsal Rooms for the first read-through of *Delta and the Bannermen*. I made it to the read-through with seconds to spare. 'John said you were three sheets to the wind last night,' said Malcolm. Actually, I wasn't. I had been drinking vodka and tonic and trying hard, but I couldn't get drunk.

Everybody at the table for the read-through introduced themselves. The 70-year-old Stubby Kaye said, 'Stubby Kaye, boy actor.' Don Henderson, wearing a CND badge and a straw hat, was smoking a rollie. The script worked well. After the scene in which the Doctor denounces Gavrok, Stubby Kaye said, 'Hot damn! He stood up to that big bugger, didn't he?'

I left Malcolm and Chris Clough in the lift talking about motorbikes.

Malcolm kept calling Stubby Kaye (a theatrical legend) 'Knobby'. There was a note from the Rehearsal Rooms re his script: 'Cut the following from the passenger list: Crovassi, Ethnon, Herret, Jaxos'.

Wednesday 24 June 1987. 'Action with the charges! Fire! Die!' Chris Clough was in a quarry outside London on a grey summer day, directing the battle scene from Malcolm's first episode. I'd met Malcolm on the iron bridge outside Royal Oak tube station that morning and we played the Stones and Buddy Holly on his car tape deck as we drove out to Sandwell Quarry, near Rickmansworth. Malcolm had his Wellington boots: *de rigueur* for quarries.

The grey sky cleared and we were out in the country with the sun shining and green all around and, like a fool, (hadn't started taking my hay fever stuff. The sunlight off the white surface of the quarry was blinding, my eyes were burning and itching and my nose was running like a tap. I was sort of wading through the awfulness of it like a deep-sea diver. Finally, I went down to beg for some antihistamines among the technicians and both guys in the scanner pulled out packets of the same kind of pill in a neatly choreographed movement. As the pills took hold, my eyes and nose dried up and I felt truculently calm, distanced from reality.

The make-up girls flinched as the gun charge spattered sparks past them. We could hear peacocks screaming in the garden of a house nearby. It was that kind of neighbourhood: peacocks in the garden. I said hello to 'Mitch' the cameraman (Alastair Mitchell). A helicopter climbed in the wide blue sky.

In his script, Malcolm described the Chimerons as 'puffy green

Michelin men' and unfortunately that's exactly what make-up gave us. They'd done an utterly shit job. 'Joke-shop masks,' said John Nathan-Turner. He wasn't pleased either.

Mike Tucker was spraying a fire extinguisher at the flaming cinder of a smoke charge. Peacocks, helicopters, yellow smoke. The Bannermen looked great against the sky. The stuntman fell off the cliff onto a pile of cardboard boxes and everybody ran to see that he was all right. John Asbridge, our talented, amiable designer, and a make-up girl were wearing matching green wellies. There were purple tissues on the ground, indicating where explosives were planted. 'Are we loaded?' 'Just loading... loaded.' Richard Croft, who was responsible for the costumes, was staring at the Bannermen extras standing on the cliffs above us. He observed, with considerable dismay, that they'd broken their banners.

The following day, I returned to the office. John had already gone on location in Wales. 'The cat's away. The cat's a-fucking-way! We're going to have a ball,' said Kate Eastcal. There were *Paradise Towers* noises from the office next to mine where they were working on the rough edit. We'd now cut Ian's wildly over-length scripts for *Dragonfire* (if they were over-length, it was the bloody script editor's fault) and now they were timed at 30 minutes. I was feeling euphoric. I felt like a professional script editor.

'I've got to ring the scanner after lunch,' said Kate. 'It's after lunch. I've got to ring the scanner.'

I was walking past the Barclays Bank on Shepherd's Bush Green and I bumped into a familiar-looking girl in a black sweater with punky blonde hair. I realised that she and her then-boyfriend had been my flatmates in the East End after university. She told me it was the second anniversary of her coming off heroin. She was now working for a video company. 'I'm raking in the maddies.' We said hello and goodbye.

It was Friday, and at the end of the working day I took Kate Eastcal back to my girlfriend Kate's basement flat in Baron's Court to join us for dinner. Kate and Kate went out in the garden for a cigarette and the slugs attacked their Rizla papers.

The following Monday, I was driving out of London with Malcolm, singing along to Buddy Holly. We were on our way to Wales, to the location for *Delta and the Bannermen*. Blazing summer. Sweaty motorway. Swathes of cloud. The Severn Bridge. We checked into the Barry Hotel and joined the queue in time for lunch. Of course.

Tiny country roads. Green, wild, overgrown with ivy. Ancient ruined remains of a stone wall. Twisted trees, wild bird cries. We could hear the distant drumming of the Vincent motorcycle back down the road. 'It's the bell

mouths that make that noise,' said Malcolm. Moss clung to a tree stump like a green monkey. A friendly Welsh cop had lunch with the unit, his helmet left resting on a fence post. A little green-faced child ran past – Amy Osborn.

We watched Delta's polka-dot skirt go up in a foam of chiffon as she climbed into the sidecar of the Vincent motorcycle. Sylvester had his new question mark umbrella (the question mark handle was his own idea). A Welsh dad and his son were watching the shooting: 'What did Bonnie Langford say to you?' The Vincent drove through a low ford and Bonnie screamed as the water flew everywhere. We moved to a field beyond a railway bridge for the next set-up. A field with sheep in it – we really were in the country. Sunshine and fresh air.

Embarrassingly, I'd been calling Sara Griffiths 'Lynn' because Lynn Gardner's name was still on the schedule. Sara was dressed in black and blue, with her lovely brown back bare. 'You see that man?' said the Welsh dad to his son, indicating a man standing beside Bonnie, 'He created **Super Ted**.' He was right, too. It was Mike Young, whom I believe knew Bonnie.

Non-speaking Bannermen were sitting on their helmets, just like real soldiers in a period of enforced idleness. Chris Clough called out, 'Stubby can you just be keeping your sausage more in the fire,' and the entire unit erupted in laughter. Sitting there in that field, I got sheep shit on my script. The special effects boys blew up a pup tent in two vast fireballs, huge double bang, echo punching off the cliff face. The riggers dumped bits of burning tent in the river. Ecologists. Not surprisingly, the sheep disappeared. 'What a shot that was,' said Stubby Kaye. 'World War Seven.'

Back at my hotel, I opened a drawer in my room and found the Holy Bible and dialling codes for Barry. Out at the airport hotel, where the cast was staying, up in the Jumbo Lounge, Sylvester was dancing like an Egyptian and Malcolm was reading about capital punishment for animals. That was almost what those poor sheep got that day.

The following day, we met Chris Sandeman at the desk of our hotel. He was picking up a box of moustaches. We joined the shoot bright and early, out at the Barry Island Butlin's holiday camp. Brian Hibbard was playing an intergalactic bounty hunter dressed as a teddy boy. 'That tie's going to need sorting out,' he said. Brian used to sing with **The Flying Pickets**. 'The Flying Dickheads,' he said.

I went and said hello to John Nathan-Turner. 'I've just bitten Chris Clough's fucking head off,' he told me. According to him, Chris, an eminently nice guy, had been going on about how cheap and crappy **Doctor Who** was. 'We're only £28,000 over budget,' said John.

John Asbridge had designed a beautiful smoky, grubby metallic **Alien-**

esque Bannermen fighter interior for us. Malcolm and I crawled around in it, awestruck and full of admiration. There were seagulls crying over the concrete island of the holiday camp. This was an eerie place even before **Doctor Who** arrived. Giant plastic bunnies held garbage pails beside the swimming pool.

A kitchen warehouse had become a makeshift studio for the Bannermen fighter and bus. The bus was a revelation, an image suddenly and powerfully made real when we saw the shots of it against the black drapes – creepy, darkened transcontinental touring bus interior, only the reading lights on above the passenger seats. It was like seeing the motorcycle the day before; you spent months with it as words and then suddenly it was *there* with all the impact of reality. ‘It’s another world in that bus,’ said Chris Sandeman. I saw a ~ » € **New Yorker** magazine lying in a box of period magazines. ‘Jayne!’ ‘Is the hairspray there? Fab. Thanks.’ Pulsing red lights against the black cloth. ‘And a good big scream, please.’

The Bannermen fighter doubled as the other Bannermen fighter. ‘Actually, it’s also the *Nosferatu*,’ said John Asbridge, referring to the ship in *Dragonfire*. We heard the incongruous sound of real holiday camp kids playing outside during the Chimeron death scene.

Next, we were shooting a scene in a dining hall. The extras were repeatedly being served the same meals and never getting to eat them as the waitresses took them away again for each retake. It was like something from one of the milder circles of Hell. Gary Downie took the time to brief a little girl sitting at one of the tables: ‘You’re a real holidaymaker and these are spacemen, so you’re not too sure about them.’ Sylvester had devised a bit of business which involved him *listening* to an apple at the start of every take. I saw a fur coat lying open with the words ‘BBC Elstree’ inside it. The dining hall was hot with summer heat and hot with the TV lights and packed with extras. ‘Quartz colour daylight’ said the light beside my shoulder. I could see the heat rising from it in waves. Sylvester poured more water and gave the apple back to the little boy for the umpteenth time. Eventually we got the shot. ‘We need a wild track.’ ‘You can do a wild track of us de-rigging.’

Sylvester and David and Belinda Mayne (Delta) sat in the back of Malcolm’s car singing along to Buddy Holly. Malcolm and I stepped out of the best Greek restaurant in Wales into an evening street and someone lit a spliff. The moon hung in the sky, clear and beautiful.

The next day, shooting continued. Don Henderson, as the bad guy, Gavrok, kicked Bonnie down in the dust. Bonnie on the kick: ‘It hurt. It was good.’ Don carried his packs of Gitanes around with him in his transparent BBC Series and Serials plastic bag. We were shooting in a tiny zone of space,

hemmed in by local people on every side.

The tour bus ('Nostalgia Trips') was lifted by a crane above a rose bed and the door in its side slid shut with the steep angle. When the door shut, the logo on the bus looked like 'Neuralgia Trips'. Sylvester autographed the door of the crane. Squatting beside the TARDIS, in the sunshine, in the long fragrant grass, I watched a tracking shot. The old local doctor – moustache, pink shirt – who lived opposite the Butlin's holiday camp had heard we were going to blow up the bus. He asked us if we could blow up the camp, too.

Bonnie and Sylvester were being followed by a party of schoolkids, literally like the Pied Piper, heading to the motorcycle for a photo call. A woman appeared leading her ancient mother, giving her a running commentary. 'And Bonnie Langford's in the sidecar.' They approached with their autograph book. John Asbridge was adjusting giant fibreglass tigers on the putting green. The extras were summoned. 'Space tourists please.' Bonnie was tap dancing to keep warm. 'Get a sun gun.' Then Bonnie autographed the door to the crane too. 'Space tourists over here. All my space tourists. Thank you.' 'Cooking navipod, take one.' Cooking quarb crystal, they meant. Did no one read these scripts?

'There's that girl over there,' said a bystander, 'what's her name?' 'Bonnie Langford,' said another bystander. The public was like an accumulation of insects on something sticky, massing at our backs as we tried to shoot the scene. 'What time's Bulman due?' asked a local lady, alluding to the TV character Don Henderson was then famed for portraying. John Asbridge got blue paint all over his fingers from retouching the TARDIS.

We ended up doing ten takes of the scene with the quarb crystal in the jar. Sylvester went pootling by on the motor scooter, past the old lady in the wheelchair, with a flock of kids on BMX racer bikes following. Sylvester obligingly stopped to sign autographs, putting the publicity photos on kids' heads so he could write on them. Sara Griffiths was watching me make notes for my diary. 'Sara doesn't have an "h" in it,' she said. It seemed Sara could read my scrawl at a distance – and upside down. Sylvester was surrounded by kids and beached BMX bicycles.

Don Henderson was adjusting his eyebrows, using his reflection in the bus window. We moved the crowd back behind a ribbon so we could blow up the bus. 'Bazooka next.' A long BBC cable with a Healee plug snaked through the dust. A policeman said, 'That girl with lots of orange hair is Bonnie Langford.' 'Orange!' said Bonnie.

There was a wonderful hot wide blue sky behind the 'Shangri-La' sign we'd erected in the holiday camp. After completing a scene, Sylvester walked past us and said, 'You can have your words back,' putting the crumpled script

page into Malcolm's teacup.

I stood talking to Don Henderson about UFOs and about his pal, fellow actor Lesley Grantham. The old local doctor came back and patted Don on the arm, 'I must just say good morning to the Prince of Darkness.' Don was our chief villain, in a fascistic black Bannermen uniform. His troops, the Bannermen extras, were busy dyeing their mouths with liquorice, spitting red liquorice gobs on the sunlit dirt. 'The Bannermen want to do their war cry again. They've got red mouths.' A giant fibreglass bear joined the lions on the putting lawn. 'You'll be unhappy to hear that my lovely T-shirt got black spray paint all over it. I was painting roses black last night,' said John Asbridge, our extremely gifted designer. Don smoked his Gitane as the Bannermen did a charge across the rose bed. 'I hope I'm not in this. Ah well. Too late.'

Stubby Kaye was failing to interest Pepsi, the producer's dog, in Hartz Dog Treats – Beef Flavour. There was genuine Bannermen *esprit de corps*. Apart from the liquorice business, Don was adding some details of his own: webbed fingers and raw meat to chew on. He was also immediately onto the Western image that Malcolm and I had wanted: sitting in a rocking chair with a rifle in his lap.

Sylvester paced the balcony practising his lines at lunchtime, wandering the putting green as the visual effects guys hammered the spaceship entrance together. We sat under the balcony with a horde of Fleet Street newspaper hacks as Sylvester approached on the Vincent motorbike for the big confrontation scene with Don. 'The shutters on their cameras clicked. Can't they get a Dalek on the bike?' 'Klingons?' 'Wrong show.'

After the scene, Don apologised to me and Malcolm because he'd had to use a handgun instead of a rifle, as called for in the script. This kind of courtesy to the writer and respect for the writing was refreshing. I arranged another group excursion to the Greek restaurant that night. 'I won't, but bless you,' said Bonnie Langford.

The next day, we shot in a deep alley at the holiday camp, blue and yellow cabins on either side, long grass in the middle uncut for years. Morning sunlight, shadows, sea haze, sea smells, gull cries and gull shadows. The night before, in the restaurant, I was talking to Sara about taramasalata, to David Kinder about Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, to Morgan Deare about Ronald Reagan and to Sylvester about Mark Forstater, a producer of our mutual acquaintance (he did **Monty Python and the Holy Grail** and bought my first script). Mitch the cameraman was at the restaurant last night too.

Pepsi was barking. Brightly coloured 1950s extras were erupting from the cabins for the bad-guys-are-coming scene. The soundman was moving through the long grass with his sound cable rustling like a snake. Lost kids' toys

lay abandoned in the grass. 'There's a script in shot. No. It's a kite.' 'You're going to be in shot, squire.' Sylvester dashed down the stairs prematurely, just before his cue. 'It's the retsina that does it,' said Mitch. Two newspaper hacks were talking to each other: 'Did you have a good night?' 'Apparently, yes.'

Brian Hibbard, looking greasy and evil in the role of Keillor, sang a beautiful brief fragment of a song. 'Sara, is your make-up in a continuity state?' 'Very quiet for sound please.' The newspaper hacks watched the shooting. They were impressed with the wonders of videotape: 'It's amazing. It's like a Polaroid. They develop it as they go along.'

We were shooting inside one of the camp's store rooms. There were racks and racks of chewing gum remover. In the eerie twilight length of the linen store there was a wonderfully strange glow to the stacked pink sheets. Blue-green glint of Sara's 1950s dance gown. Brian Hibbard was doing his Keillor lines in a South African accent ('Gunnict me with the Bannermen leader' for 'Connect me...'). Sylvester was writing his line about the ion beam on one of the laundry shelves. In the womb-like darkness of the linen store, people were moving quietly. There was a shrouded black and white monitor in the shadows, a smoke gun discreetly plugged into the wall with the word 'heating' lit up on it in red. 'It's melodrama,' said Chris Clough, 'but it's only slight melodrama.' 'That's one of the greatest directions I've ever had,' said Sylvester.

'Can you look more frightened Sara? Keep it tighter from the beginning I think, Mitch.' 'That boom was in again.' 'I think "again" is the wrong word,' responded the sound guy. Chris Clough was directing the actors. 'What you've got to do is scream and fall down vertically.' Brian was doing his Richard III bit.

That night, we were shooting the dance scene. 'Technicians' toes were tapping in time to *Why Do Fools Fall in Love?*. There was a spotlight and tinsel down at the far end of the hot hall. Green lights across the crane. The Wilson sisters bopping in their low-cut black dresses and black gloves. Chris Sandeman delivered Pepsi to John Nathan-Turner. 'She's just had a crap.' 'How lovely.' I thought that the band was playing the wrong song for this part of the scene, and I was right. But in that hot, crowded, rectangular, orange room it was impossible to move my brain to think what the right song should have been. All the colours and the physical activity of the dance were making the script come to life in an amazing way. Tension was growing. Chris had just called Mitch 'Chas'. Seven o'clock was approaching and the musicians were only hired until seven. The extras were beginning to enjoy the dance. In the end we got it, and it was a wrap.

Kate Easteal sat outside on a giant plastic rabbit with a broken ear and

Anne Faggetter took a picture of her and Malcolm and me in the coppery setting sunlight. We walked across the holiday camp to the dance hall, where we were having the unit party. Malcolm and I volunteered to serve behind the bar and, while we were pouring drinks and handing them out, something like a dozen people came up at intervals and said exactly the same thing to us: 'Nice to see you doing some work at last.'

'Greetings, sensation-seekers,' said Sylvester McCoy on stage. The unit party cabaret had begun. Sylvester's act involved putting the end of a giant piece of elastic in Don Henderson's mouth, unrolling it as he climbed over the audience, making his way away from the stage until the elastic was good and tight. Then he asked Don if he was ready and, of course, the instant Don opened his mouth to reply the elastic came shooting out and Sylv went catapulting across the room. Huge applause. 'That was Sylvester McCoy and the lovely Don Henderson.' There was also an enormous roar of laughter from the audience when someone came prancing on-stage in a wicked parody of John Nathan-Turner: effeminate gestures, curly hair, lurid Hawaiian shirt and a fake little poodle standing in for Pepsi. John took it with amiable good humour.

I left the party late and walked back towards the hotel. It was Saturday morning now instead of Friday night. The holiday camp swimming pool looked ghostly in the darkness, abandoned fun stuff bobbing in it. Cars' headlights flashed like lightning in the distance. I was walking along the dark road from Barry Island to the mainland. A quiet moment. Water lapped. Weeds waved. I stopped and stared out and imagined I could see Gatsby's green light across the water.

On the mainland, there were taxis shuttling back and forth, teenagers pissing against walls, girls laughing in the street. A drunk, wearing sunglasses in the night, holding a sharp vinegar-smelling cone of fish and chips, stumbled slightly as he walked up the hill. I rang the night bell of the hotel. Curtains billowed in the breeze on this hot night. A mere few hours later, it was five in the morning and I was knocking on Kate Easteal's door across the corridor. I was so tired I couldn't remember her name. It seemed that Kate was in there in a tryst with one of the handsome male members of the guest cast but we had to go back to London. Our ride was about to leave. Ann Faggetter drove us back to London, Kate asleep on the back seat under my jacket. Mist on the motorway. Red sun rising in it. Cardboard cut-out trees flashed by. Back in London, I had a coffee at Kate's then caught the tube to my girlfriend's.

Delta and the Bannerman was in the can.

Two months later, we had the rough edit of episode one, which was great. A

week later, I was sitting with John Nathan-Turner and Chris Clough. 'Do we see enough of that?' 'Think so. We have a tracker dart theme as well.' We were watching a rough cut of episode two. We looked at the bit where Billy the mechanic is moving to kiss Delta. 'It looks like he's about to pounce on her mouth,' said John, 'Suck face, as the Americans say.'

Malcolm came in and saw a rough cut, and he loved it.

Tuesday 27 October 1987. We had another press launch, especially for *Delta and the Bannermen*. John had taken the unusual step of a second press launch that season because *Delta and the Bannermen* had such a star-studded cast (most of whom, it has to be said, were names unknown to me). But I was very pleased about this, because I saw it as a chance to recover some of the lost ground from the first launch, in which the press were invited to sample the new season of **Doctor Who** and were obliged to sit through € } îminutes of a story set ^ya gravel pit (thus confirming all their worst suspicions about the show).

Instead of BAFTA, the launch this time was at the Trocadero, a garish futuristic shopping mall near Piccadilly Circus, in 'Light Fantastic' – a hologram exhibition centre. I walked into the brightly lit mall and saw Kate Eastal serenely ascending on an escalator in this chrome and mirrored world. She waved. The screening took place simultaneously on two large screens facing each other on opposite walls. There was a bank of seats on either side of the room but, when Malcolm and I sat down in the front row of one, everybody followed us like sheep and sat behind us, leaving the other side of the room completely empty. The **News on Sunday** woman with the Sainsbury's shopping bag snorted and suppressed a laugh when we saw that first shot of the Chimeron face. She was absolutely right. But basically the story held them. They paid attention and there was a shimmer of amusement at the funny bits. When the screening ended, Don Henderson's wife loudly led the clapping. What a nice lady. Don was carrying the **Guardian** and wearing a CND peace sign badge and a sweatshirt that appeared to carry a cigarette pack caution label, but which on close inspection read 'Warning: H. M. Government can damage your health'.

The next week, Chris Penfold, a fellow script editor, popped in to tell me that his sons (11 and 12) both enjoyed **Doctor Who** the night before – the first episode of *Delta and the Bannermen*. They used to watch it when they were little and they'd both given up on it, until now.

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy with Bonnie Langford in *Absolute Zero*, a three-part adventure by IAN BRIGGS
1: Andrew is not impressed with the studio-bound realisation of Ice World, but both Ian Briggs and Sophie Aldred make a good impression.

Kracauer.....TONY OSOBA
McLuhan
STEPHANIE FAYERMAN
Zed.....SEAN BLOWERS
Bazin.....STUART ORGAN
Pudovki...NIGEL MILES-THOMAS
Kane.....EDWARD PEEL
The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Customer.....SHIRIN TAYLOR
Stellar.....MIRANDA BORMAN
Announcer.....LYNN GARDNER
Anderson.....IAN MCKENZIE
Glitz.....TONY SELBY
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Belazs.....PATRICIA QUINN
Creature.....LESLIE MEADOWS
Theme music composed by
RON GRAINER
Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN
Costume designer RICHARD CROFT
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE
Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
Director CHRIS CLOUGH

• FRATURE: page 21
★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy with Bonnie Langford in *Absolute Zero*, a three-part adventure by IAN BRIGGS
2: With this story in front of the cameras, it's fast getting time to get four more stories into pre-production for next year.

Melanie.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Creature.....LESLIE MEADOWS
The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Glitz.....TONY SELBY
Kane.....EDWARD PEEL
Belazs.....PATRICIA QUINN
Pudovki...NIGEL MILES-THOMAS
Arnheim...CHRIS MACDONNELL
Kracauer...TONY OSOBA
Announcer.....LYNN GARDNER
Archivist...DAPHNE OXENFORD
Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN
Make-up designer GILLIAN THOMAS
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE
Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
Director CHRIS CLOUGH
★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35 Doctor Who

Last in the present series starring Sylvester McCoy with Bonnie Langford in *Absolute Zero*, a three-part adventure by IAN BRIGGS
Kane's lolly melts, then Kane melts. Then Mel leaves. Can't think of a Mel/melt pun. Sorry.

Creature.....LESLIE MEADOWS
Glitz.....TONY SELBY
The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Mel.....BONNIE LANGFORD
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Kane.....EDWARD PEEL
Bazin.....STUART ORGAN
McLuhan
STEPHANIE FAYERMAN
Stellar.....MIRANDA BORMAN
Anderson.....IAN MCKENZIE
Customer.....SHIRIN TAYLOR
Announcer.....LYNN GARDNER
Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN
Visual effects designer ANDY MEVEAN
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE
Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
Director CHRIS CLOUGH
★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 6

* & % 4

Funny business, time.

I first met Ian Briggs when both of us were invited to the BBC Writers Workshop, an initiative by Tony Dinner, head of the Script Unit, designed to encourage new talent. Malcolm Kohll was another member of the group, and so was Robin Mukherjee. When I joined **Doctor Who** one of my first actions was to ring Tony Dinner and get the phone numbers for these writers.

I duly summoned Ian to Shepherd's Bush and we started what would become hours of script discussions in my office. Our first stab at an Ian Briggs **Doctor Who** concerned the TARDIS and its infinite interior. One of the ploys of the amusing bad guy was to develop this vast interior for property development (in 1987, as now, the real estate market in London was superheated and the subject of much publicity).

John Nathan Turner's response to this land-scam story was unenthusiastic. 'I don't think the teenies will get it,' he said. 'The TARDIS is bigger on the inside than the outside. That's about as much as they will understand.'

He was right. It was not a great story. Back to the drawing board. I went back down the hall to my office to tell Ian to think again.

Thursday • February 1987. Ian's story was coming along a treat. The previous week, I had thought it was dead but he came in and sat down and talked to me across my desk and everything he said, every idea he proposed was *right*. I loved it. I got Ian's latest draft of his outline and it seemed perfect to me.

Friday 27 February 1987. I was working with Ian Briggs on his outline for a **Doctor Who** story called *The Pyramid's Treasure*. We'd been developing this painstakingly for over a month by now, and we were down to the fine tuning before I handed it over to John. There was a character in it called the Fatboy, a loathsome villain. In one scene, Ian now had him wearing a Hawaiian shirt. Now, John had a well-known penchant for wearing such shirts. Indeed, lurid Hawaiian shirts were John's trademark. (Fifteen years later, Sylvester and Sophie attended John's memorial service wearing Hawaiian shirts as a tribute.) So, with immense paranoia, I removed the Hawaiian shirt line, explaining to Ian why I was doing it. 'Perhaps we should also drop the reference to the gay television producer in the last paragraph,' said Ian. I like Ian.

Wednesday 4 March 1987. I showed Ian's storyline to John. We sat in his office and went through it. John didn't like it at all – even with all the Hawaiian shirts removed. I suppressed the urge to panic and started salvaging what I could. I'd have to get Ian to take another crack at it. Thinking about John's reaction after the meeting, I found myself suppressing not panic but

anger. Three quarters of what John had said was accurate, practical objection. But a quarter was prejudice against Ian. The more I thought about the struggles we'd had with Pip and Jane's script, the angrier I got. I was determined to commission some writers of my own, like Ian, to balance things. Headache and nausea haunted my day. I was trapped in hallways with the painful stink of new paint and in story conferences with the Dachau stink of cigarettes. I'd been having classic anxiety dreams. In them, I'd been commissioned to write a script for *EastEnders* which was due in on Friday evening and it was Friday morning and I hadn't started it yet.

While the turbulence continued over *Time and the Rani*, I was working with Ian Briggs, trying to restore his confidence – and mine – and come up with a new storyline that John would accept. I took him to lunch at Television Centre. As we sat down, the guy at the next table began to snap his fingers and point at me. It was the director Chris Goddard. I'd met him some months earlier before I'd landed the job on *Doctor Who* and was still trying to find a way into television.

By the end of March, it looked like Ian was finally going to get the go-ahead for his episode one.

Thursday 2 April 1987. John was on the phone to an agent, checking an actor's availability. 'If the script goes firm, I'd like to go firm on Tone.' This was Tony Selby, the guy who had played Glitz in the previous season. (Glitz was a character created by the late great Robert Holmes, so at least this would mean some royalties for his widow.) The script in question was Ian's, and the inclusion of a character from an earlier story to make John happy seemed like a small price to pay.

Glitz had a sidekick called Dibber. 'I got the hots for Dibber, actually,' said Kate Easteal. Kate was coming down to location the following week on the coach, bringing the 'Tetraps' heads with her. Sylvester McCoy was pacing around the rehearsal room in his panama hat and a pair of baggy blue tracksuit trousers. I was reading *City Limits* magazine, which had an article about sex toys featuring a Dalek dildo. John Nathan-Turner asked for a photocopy of the article. I wondered if a Dalek dildo lawsuit was in the offing.

Thursday 9 April 1987. Ian Briggs's new *Doctor Who* story was called *Dragonfire* and it was splendid, full of vivid, funny dialogue that rang true. I had episode one on my desk. I got Ian this far despite John's initial prejudice against him. Today, the crunch came and John was to pass judgement on the script: either we'd go ahead with Ian or I'd be forced to ditch him. I felt like my whole future was in the balance. I wanted to do scripts that I believed were good. I wanted to choose the writers. In the end, I wanted to shape the character of the show. Create a sense of wonder. Make the Doctor an enigma again. Fuck

the explanatory lumber of my 20 years of predecessors. And Ian was a writer I wanted and knew to be good. And John's judgement so far was dead against him. Ian had fucked up the preliminary chat-with-the-producer and then I had encouraged him to come up with a wacko initial storyline that John hated.

John had got back from the *Time and the Rani* location the previous night. He got into the office late today. The **Doctor Who** office was full of sunlight; I hoped that was an omen. Kate Easteal was dressed all in black; I hoped that wasn't. I sat talking with Graeme Curry, trying not to feel the tension while John shut himself away with Ian's episode one. At least I was having a good time with Graeme. In fact, a great time. His story was taking shape nicely. Then John summoned me into his office...

I came out walking on air. I took Graeme down to the coffee bar. Sunlight streamed through the windows. I couldn't believe it. John had accepted Ian's script. It was all actually working! It was like feeling a car begin to start three months after you push the accelerator. I was grinning like a fool. I rang Ian to tell him the good news. John had actually said that it was good. 'He's got the format,' he said. I don't know if I'd ever been so happy. I was grinning all the way back to Hammersmith. Cold spring evening. Waiting for a train. The sheer *relief* I felt when John said he liked the script.

Tuesday 14 April – Ian delivered his second episode in the usual brown London Business School envelope. This one had 'Episode Two – read it and weep. PS. Has this been commissioned yet?' written on it. Ian's script was brilliant, with his 'Crewmen/ Women' (equal opportunity among futuristic space thugs; it was so nice and so right and I wouldn't have thought of it). And then there was his fabulous character Ace, making exclamations like 'doughnut!' and 'Mega!' Ace was great. I suspected that she might end up being the new companion when Bonnie left, things coming 360 degrees around after all we'd been through. John was interviewing Kangs for *Paradise Towers* and he came in and said about one girl, 'She's Ace. She's not a Kang. I think I've found Ace.'

John Nathan-Turner was talking about another actress. 'Sort of like Sarah Sutton with balls.'

Wednesday 15 April 1987. This was the day of the wake for Patrick Troughton at Television Centre. Afterwards, a small nucleus of mourners came back to the **Doctor Who** office. It was a sunny day. John had the windows wide open and the office door kept slamming in the breeze with great violence.

There were giant bottles of red and white supermarket wine to hand. John was introducing me around. I tried to tell Janet Fielding how much I admired her performance in the screen test but I'd miscalculated the time and

place and it just sounded like the usual bullshit. I sat on a filing cabinet drinking white wine with Kate Eastal, as Nicholas Courtney (the Brigadier) and his girlfriend rang for a taxi. Nick's girlfriend was blonde, an American with an admirable command of idiomatic English. 'We haven't been there for yonks,' she said at one point.

Wednesday 20 May 1987. Mike Tucker introduced me to a guy called Lindsay MacGowan, who had done creature design on **Legend** and **Aliens**. There was a possibility he'd be doing the creature for *Dragonfire*, which would be fantastic. Lindsay was only in England because his work permit for the States had lapsed, and he was only at the BBC for another month or so. I took a look at his portfolio and it was staggeringly good. I hoped that the BBC bureaucracy wouldn't screw this possibility up. I loved special effects, the whole business of it. It was becoming clear that science fiction and fantasy films were something I should pursue. I loved the stuff.

A fortnight later, Chris Clough showed me a Polaroid of the creature for Ian's story – the Dragon – and it was wonderful, since Lindsay did get to build it after all. A striking image of his design, bleached white by the Polaroid flash. Fantastic menacing white scales and bone. An insect head.

I met Colin Rogers in the lift. He said he liked all the **Doctor Who** scripts by the new writers. I arranged to meet him for a proper talk the next week.

Thursday 9 July 1987. I got back from shooting *Delta and the Bannermen* in Wales and went straight on to *Dragonfire*. Full speed ahead. Talking to Ian Briggs in my office, kept calling him 'Stephen' and 'Malcolm'. Yet again I felt like a father of many children. I opened a letter on my desk, another note from Bill Joule (a pseudonym; apologies to any real Bill Joules). Ian applauded. He is familiar with the Bill Joule situation. Bill Joule was this guy who had written a **Doctor Who** script called (let's say) *Digital Man*, which had been rejected once, but he kept insisting that this script would 'save **Doctor Who**'. He would send recorded delivery letters demanding that we reconsider. 'I have one question,' he said in his letter – have you read *Digital Man*? Having written to John Nathan-Turner, then to me, he tried writing to Michael Grade, who basically ran the BBC. I ended up with all these letters on my desk. Kate Eastal looked at my face as I open this latest one. She said, 'This is the effect *Digital Man* has on our script editor. Digital-Fucking-Man.'

Early next week the famous script arrived. After weeks of shrill clamouring by its author, it was being given a second (and very final) chance. The results were unequivocal. It was unbelievably bad. We added the writer, Bill Joule to the notice board in my office, which was now known as the 'death board'. There was a drawing of Bill Joule, a stick figure being hanged. Out of

his mouth came a word balloon: 'I have one question. Have you read *Digital Man*?'

Now Ian Briggs added another word balloon: 'Yes – it sucks.'

Thursday 16 July 1987. At ten o'clock on a Thursday morning in North Acton we had the read-through for *Dragonfire*. I was sitting beside the production assistant Rosemary Parsons, with my Welsh suntan beginning to flake off. (In the Television Centre canteen fellow script editor Valerie Ryan said, 'Have you got a suntan or is it a trick of the light?') Sylvester cracked jokes in mid speech as he read his part in the script.

An actress called Sophie Aldred was there to play Ace, this wonderful anarchic teenager Ian had written, who sort of grew out of a Cockney checkout girl from a storyline that I'd invented in January that was scrapped and changed. Sophie turned up in shorts and Doc Martens and she looked good in them. I asked Richard Croft, the costume designer, if she could wear the DMs when she was Ace as well. There were scripts on the table, a model of the set, lipstick on a BBC paper cup.

Back at my office, I was chatting with Ian when Ben Aaronovitch dropped in. –give him a copy of the letter I wrote praising his abilities to the sky (every word true) in an attempt to get him on the BBC Writers' Course (I failed miserably). Ben was literally blushing as he read it. The letter contained phrases like 'fiercely inventive' in describing his abilities. Ben put the letter down when he'd finished. 'This is a great ego massage.' The phone rang and it was the Rehearsal Rooms saying they needed a more futuristic fruit drink name for the scene in the refreshment bar in *Dragonfire*. I asked Ben to come up with something. 'This is where the fiercely inventive bit comes in,' said Ian. Stephen Wyatt also dropped in, and for the next quarter of an hour we had three of the best young writers in Britain trying to come up with a name for some futuristic fruit drink. Betty the BBC post lady opened the door to deliver the mail. 'I thought it was another writer,' said Ben.

(The name we finally settled on for the drink was Astral Cascade.)

Just after Ian left, we got another phone call from the Rehearsal Rooms asking us to add some technical-sounding gibberish to extend the scene between the Doctor and Arnheim (I loved Ian's names). So I lifted a passage about semiotics from a very pretentious text book about **Doctor Who** I happened to have on my shelves, and paraphrased that. I sent it off to the team at the Rehearsal Rooms and then took off with my girlfriend for a well-earned holiday in the south of France. While I was away, Ian attended the run-through of the script and laughed aloud when he heard this semiotic dialogue. 'Who wrote it?' he asked. 'We thought you did,' they told him.

A week and a half later, we began shooting *Dragonfire*. There was a

blue light shining in the studio. 'Oh, it's all lit up!' cried Ian. Then, 'Sorry, I'm getting very child-at-Christmas here.' 'The Chimeron baby was cool,' observed Lindsay MacGowan, in reference to one of the effects from the last shoot. Lindsay came into the studio yesterday to see what they'd done to the monster he'd designed. What they'd done was added a neck, broken all the spines off and got the colours wrong. He was there until 3.00 am trying to put things right and he was back again now. The other special effects guys didn't understand his concern. 'Are you *still* working on it?' Poor Lindsay. He was talented and he cared about what he was doing and he'd tried to make **Doctor Who** look good; and someone stole his airbrush last night.

Everyone was still at lunch and in the studio at Television Centre there was a cluster of cameras like a huddle of robots all standing staring intently at a colour code chart. There was a huge white plastic box with dry ice smoke spilling out. This was all part of Ice World, the environment dreamt up by Ian for his very groovy script. 'Props please. Chris Sandeman, we need a carrier bag.' We did a retake of the materialisation scene and Bonnie and Sylvester and Mike Tucker all came out of the TARDIS (a theoretically infinite space but in practice very tiny and cramped and crowded) and it was carried off again.

The monstrous 'dragon' picked up Miranda Borman (playing Stellar, the little girl). 'Right. Okay. Cut. Well done.' A little boy in a wheelchair talked to Leslie Meadows, who was wearing the monster suit. 'I saw you pick her up, I did,' said the little boy. He and all his brothers were dying of a rare form of M. S. Kate Eastal sat on the studio floor with one of the poor little guys sitting huddled protectively between her legs. I borrowed Sylvester and got him to pose with the children and shot off all my remaining Polaroid films and gave them to the kids.

I was sitting with Ian above the studio floor in the control room when this dark, somnolent, subdued place suddenly erupted into life – England had scored against Pakistan at cricket. 'Back to the curry house, boys!' said one of the technicians triumphantly. Some might say I should have been dwelling on the political incorrectness of the remark. But I was actually thinking, 'If only they'd take this much interest in the programmes they're making.'

'Can John Asbridge look at the shot?' asked a control room voice. 'We have a Forbidden Zone shoot-off.' The two-hander scene between Ace and Kane (Edward Peel) was genuine magic. 'I was getting quite caught up in that,' said John Asbridge. That was thanks to Ian's superb writing, in happy conjunction with some talented actors. The dry ice streamed eerily in. I could *feel* the series improving, like a ship turning onto the correct course.

Down on the studio floor, Patricia Quinn, playing Belazs, was saying,

‘The black from the guns rubs off. It’s hazardous, darling.’ There was a butterfly floating above the freezer centre set. A Shepherd’s Bush butterfly that had wandered in from the sunlight outside. ‘Look,’ said Ian, ‘a Red Admiral.’ Mike Tucker had to turn on the TARDIS light while holding the door shut. ‘There’s no end to my talents,’ he said. The TARDIS really was a shabby wreck. Considering that it was a television icon known all over the world for over 20 years, it was a bloody disgrace. It wobbled as they shut the door. The lines in the script ‘This is our space craft,’ and the disbelieving response – ‘I’m not stupid’ – sounded terribly apt.

We were into the second day in the studio for *Dragonfire*. ‘It’s bloody freezing down here,’ said Kate Easteal. ‘It’s Ice World,’ said Mike. They had just botched the wonderful scene Ian wrote in which Kane kills the sculptor and *the sculptor doesn’t resist*. The way Chris Clough shot it, there’s no indication that the sculptor submits willingly; Kane grabs him from behind. If they’d shown us during rehearsals how they were intending to shoot it, there would have been a chance to correct it. Instead, a great scene became a routine scene.

The little kid alone in the set flooded with dry ice looked monumentally eerie. All the minor characters and two-handers and dialogue and conflict in the script were outstanding. Ian’s script was going to be the best of the lot that season. Cool smoke flooded out of the dry ice vats, floating eerily among the cameras as it drifted through the studio. ‘Temperature gauges full up. Melted statue in, please.’ We stopped shooting because the tiny curls on Glitz’s sideboards (sideburns) were too tight. John Nathan-Turner was very concerned about this. ‘I think they’re darker than last year but they’re exactly the same in terms of spacing and curl,’ said Tony Selby, who played Glitz. ‘They’re definitely darker than last year,’ he added after ten minutes. The whole production had ground to a halt. Gillian Thomas from make-up was up in the control room with another set of fake sideboards. ‘They’re lighter.’ ‘These are the ones,’ said John. They were talking about re-shooting all of Tony Selby’s scenes. You could bet they wouldn’t re-shoot the fucking Kane/sculptor scene.

The tension was growing. Ian and I rewrote a line and John dismissed it with a snarl. ‘Pure panto,’ he said.

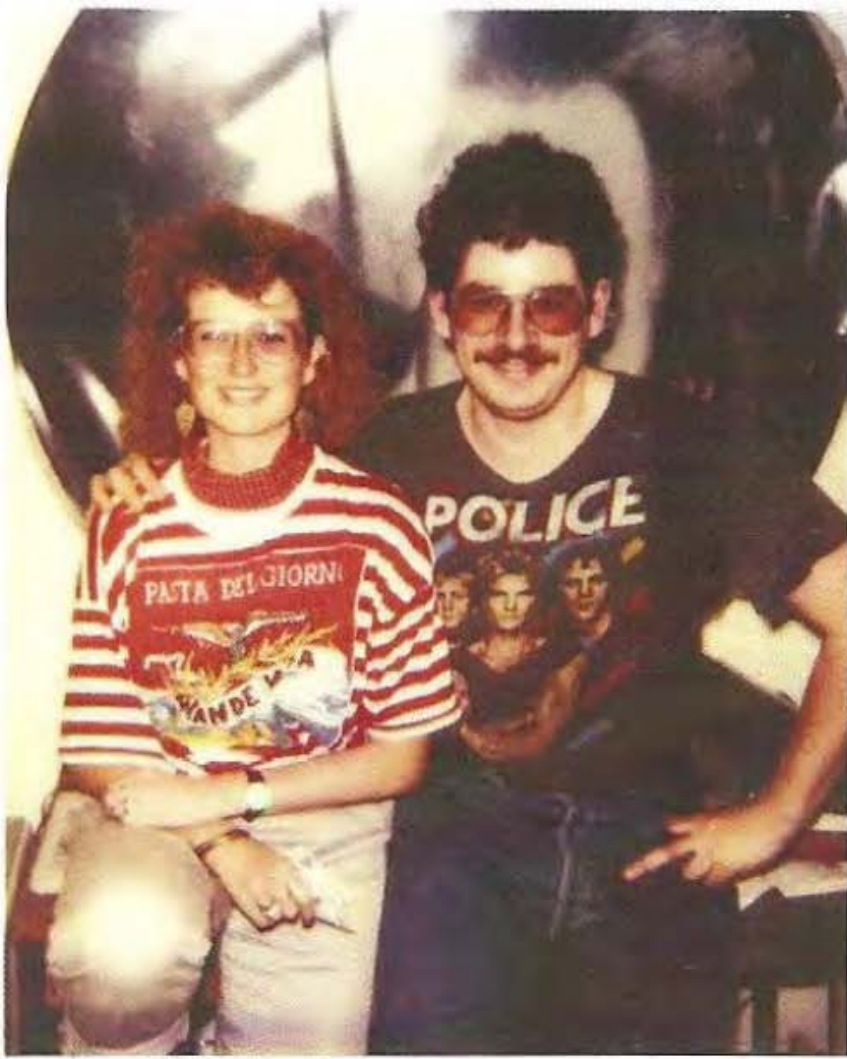
But the shooting of *Dragonfire* was also the occasion for one of my best memories of this show. Walking into the warm crowded noisy cafeteria in the Red Assembly to find it full of frozen mercenaries, space customers and Ice World guards. The visual effects guys showing us the silver deodorant cans (they were silver because, after all, this is the future) which in the story Ace cheerfully packs with her home-made explosive Nitro-9. ‘We went through 16



Pamela Salem, Sylvester and Karen Gledhill on location in Hammersmith
for *Remembrance of the Daleks*



Back row: Graeme Curry, JN-T, Stephen Wyatt, front row: director Andrew
Morgan and writer Ben Aaronovitch in a screening room

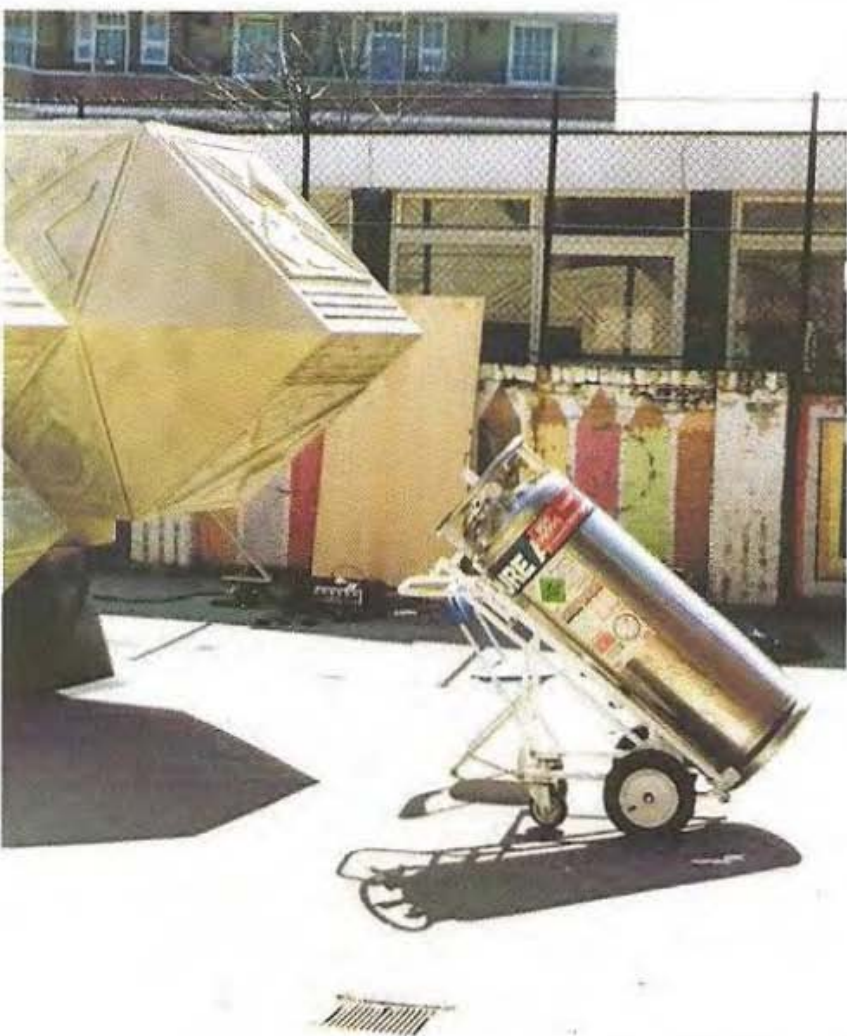


*Above, left: Kate Easteal and Ben Aaronovitch in the **Doctor Who** office with one of those giant photos of Sylvester McCoy looming in the background*



Photographs courtesy of Andrew Cartmel and Steve Cook

Above, right: Sylvester with one of the Doctor's sworn enemies

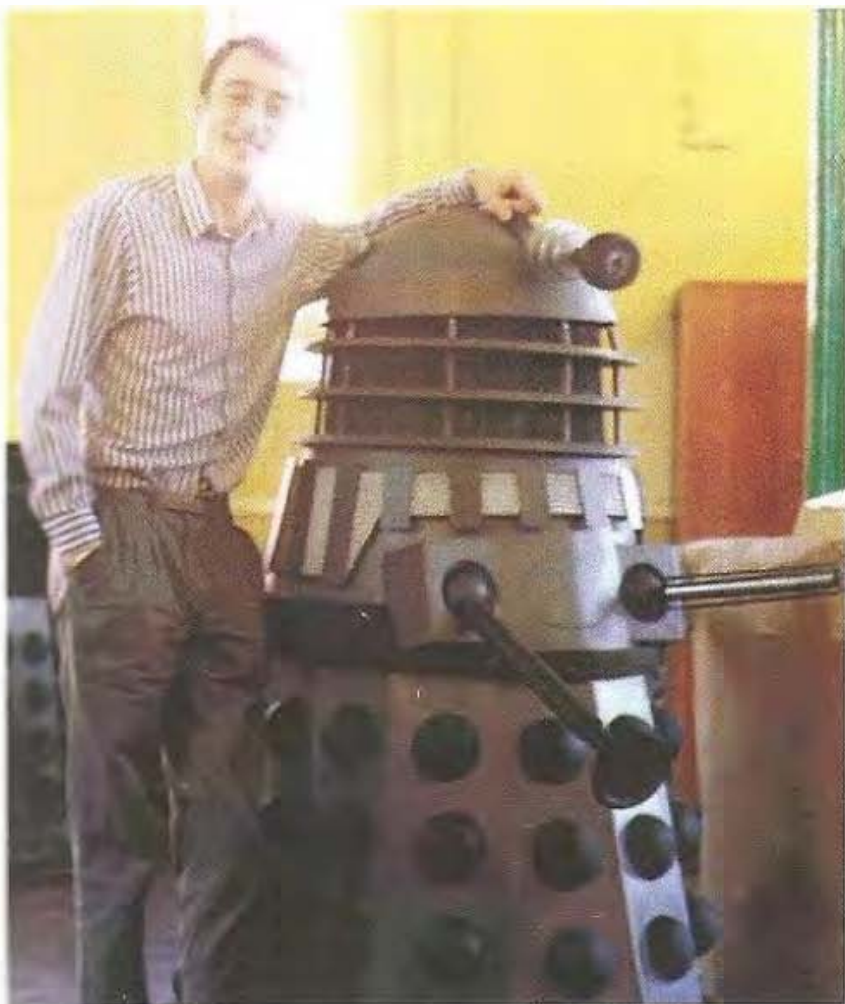


Above, left: The Dalek spaceship in the schoolyard at the Hammersmith location



Photographs courtesy of Kate Bruce

Above, right: Myself and Kevin Clarke in the same location

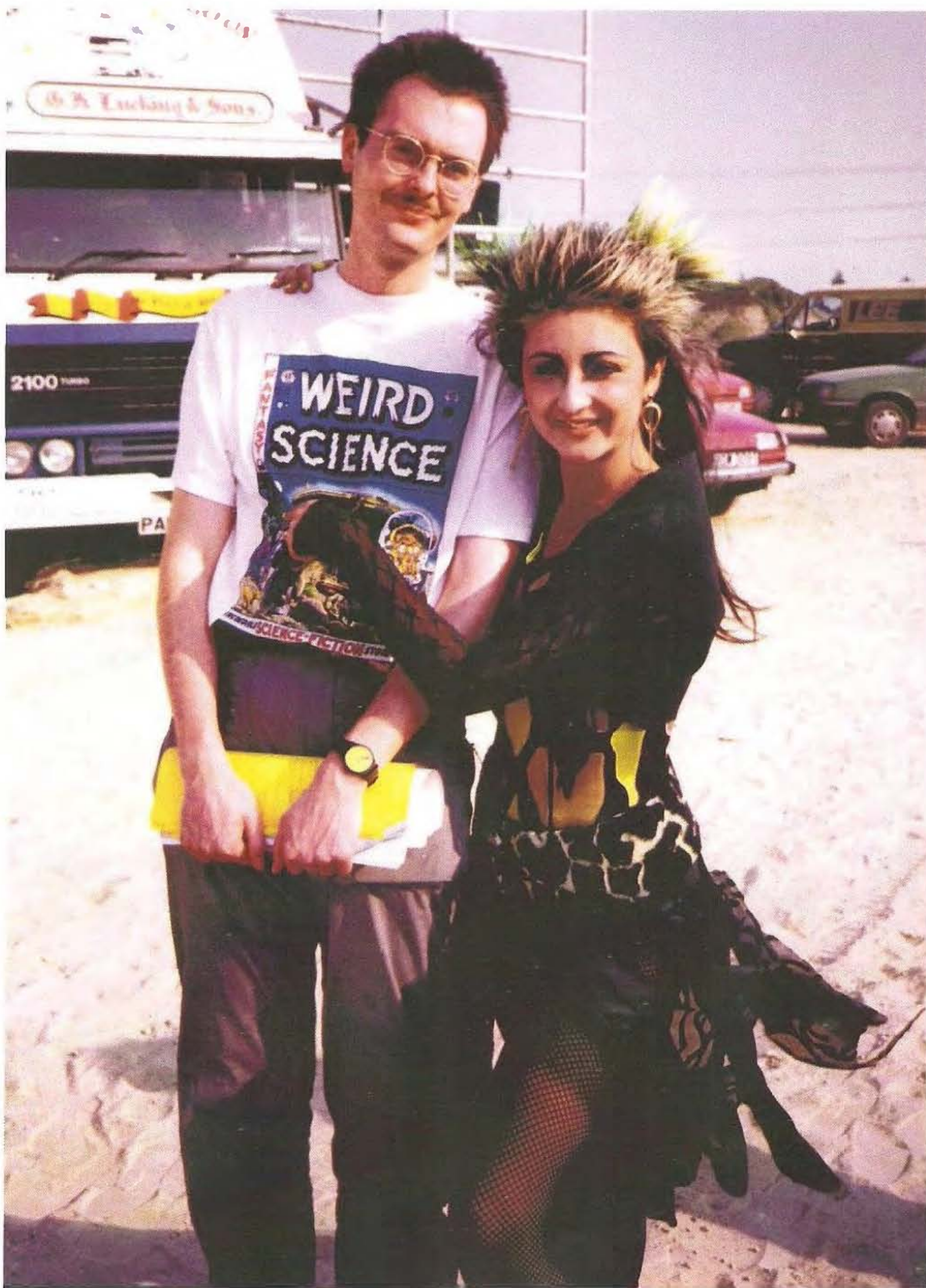


Above, left: Kevin Clarke posing with a Dalek during a visit to the *Remembrance of the Daleks* location

Above right: Ian Briggs holding a maquette (miniature scale model) of the creature from *Dragonfire*

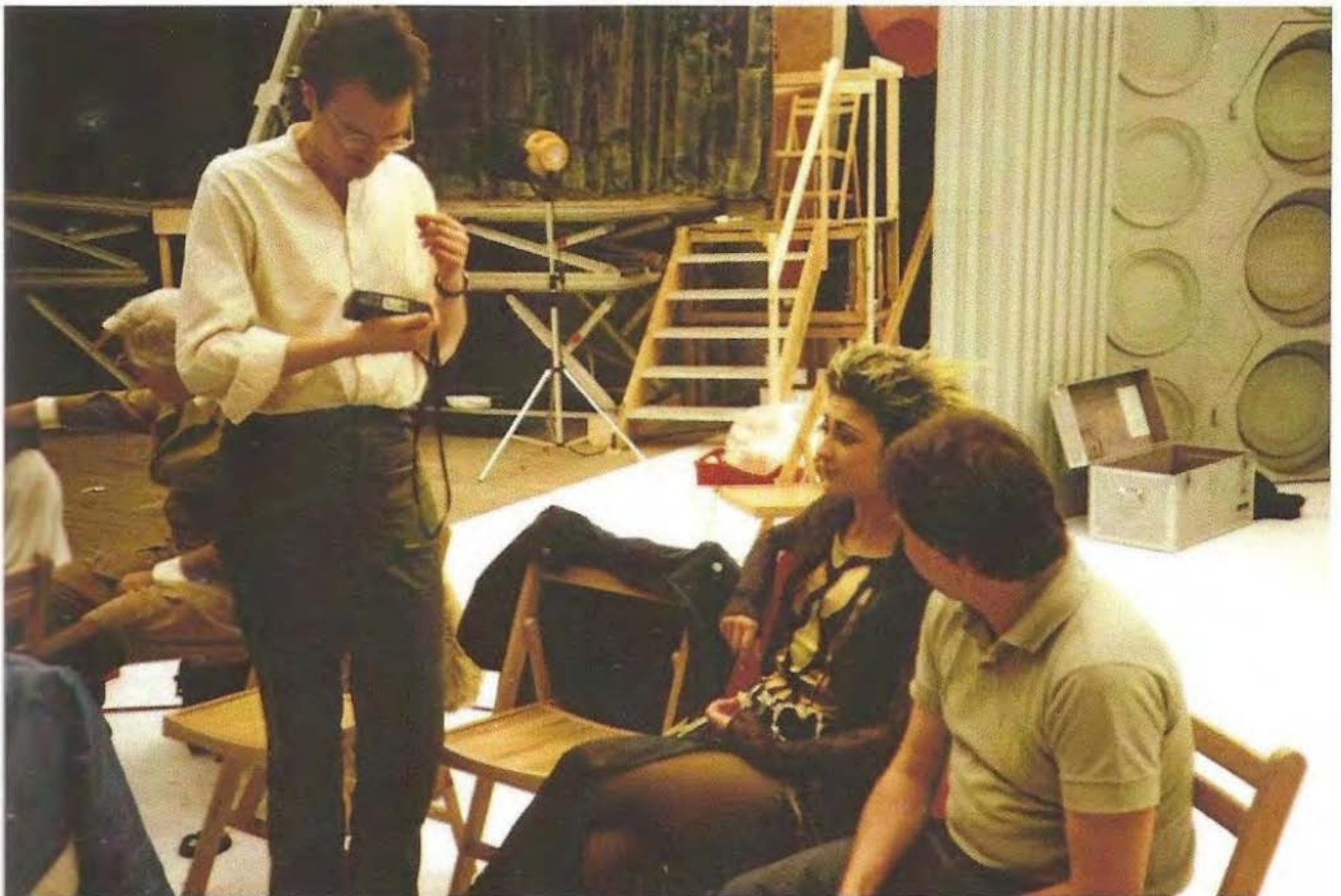


Simon Williams, Karen Gledhill, Pamela Salem, Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred on location for *Remembrance of the Daleks*



Above, left: Me with the amazing Jessica Martin as Mags, the werewolf, on location for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*. (As you will have gathered I was a T-shirt nut in those days, this one is an image of a classic 1950s Wally Wood science fiction cover for EC Comics)

Photograph courtesy of Mark Ayres



Me, Jessica Martin and Stephen Wyatt in the makeshift studio
for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*

Photograph courtesy of Stephen Wyatt



Sophie, me and Sylv ●n location for
The Greatest Show in the Galaxy



Photograph courtesy of Mark Ayres

Stephen and I on the set of *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*



Photograph courtesy of Mark Ayres

On location for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*, which was being shot in a makeshift structure in the car park at Elstree studios as a result of an asbestos discovery at our normal studios

Photograph courtesy of Stephen Wyatt

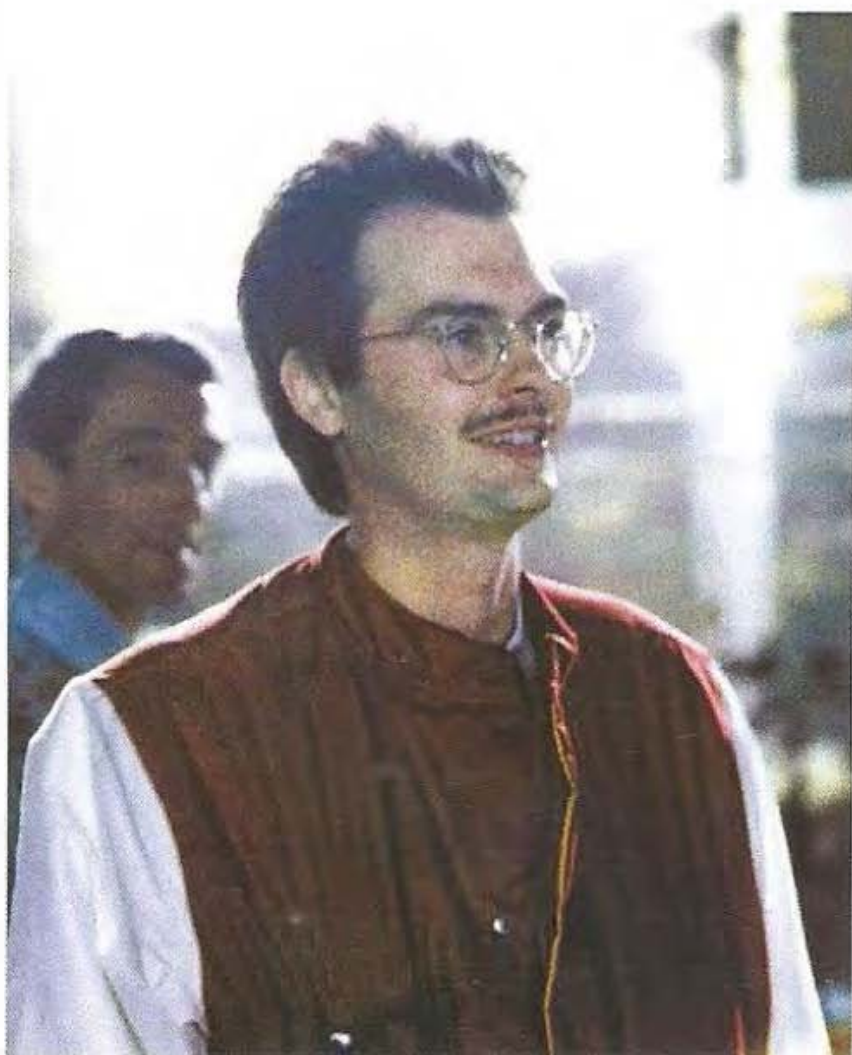


Ian Reddington and Sophie Aldred taking a break during
The Greatest Show in the Galaxy

Photograph courtesy of Stephen Wyatt



Sophie, Stephen Wyatt, Sylvester and TP McKenna on location
for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*



Photographs courtesy of Mike Tucker and Andrew Carroll

Above, left: Me on location for *Silver Nemesis* with writer Kevin Clarke standing just behind me

Above, right: Stephen Wyatt and Graeme Curry on location during the *Silver Nemesis* shoot



Photograph courtesy of Andrew Carroll

Kevin Clarke being menaced by Cybermen on location for *Silver Nemesis*

pints of Sainsbury's cream to get these.' 'You heroes.' said Ian.

Gary Downie was giving the zombie extras speech instructions: 'Just snarls and growls. Jim Hawkins acting.' A nice, somewhat larger-than-life woman called Sue Moore (John Nathan-Turner nicknamed her Foghorn Lil) was there with her model team to provide the extraterrestrials for the refreshment bar sequence, most notably a nasty little fanged goblin called Eric. Terrific work. They also had a fabulous half-flayed skull for the scene where Kane's head melts. I couldn't believe we'd get away with that.

If anyone is keeping track, we seemed to be referencing **Star Wars** in the refreshment bar scene and **Raiders of the Lost Ark** in Kane's melting. And we were exploring the tropes of **Alien** and **Aliens** when the Dragon appeared. It felt great that the show was actually addressing proper science fiction and fantasy again.

Before we went into the studio, I spent a long working day watching all the videos of the previous season's **Doctor Who**. Up to then I'd been devoting myself to earlier, more classic episodes. 'More classic' is being tactful. Just before I joined the show, **Doctor Who** had been entering a bit of a slump. The script editor, the able Eric Saward, had eventually fallen out with John Nathan-Turner and the stories showed a certain lack of inspired commitment. Or perhaps it was just exhaustion. In any case, watching those final episodes I felt like I was having sludge slowly pumped into my brain, like I was being gradually given an anaesthetic. There were no stories in those scripts. Even Robert Holmes (a great writer whom Eric Saward stalwartly supported) wasn't at his best) and the story by Philip Martin, who wrote the brilliant **Gangsters**, was a major disappointment.

Crucially, there was no feeling for science fiction or fantasy in the show at the point where I took over. Basically the scripts were failed thrillers full of confusing incident and boring characters with science fiction *detail* arbitrarily heaped on, but nothing genuinely science fictional about them. No core or centre to these stories.

I believed that, with *Paradise Towers*, *Delta and the Bannermen* and then *Dragonfire*, we were beginning to tell proper stories again, and ones that were actually also science fiction.

Glasses and tables went flying, cupcake shrapnel at our feet after the scene where the zombies clear the refreshment bar. Eric the puppet yawning between takes. Halfway through a take, Sylv said, 'Sorry, I fucked it up.' 'I don't remember that line,' said Ian. 'Can we clear this table please,' said one of the floor managers, 'Eric has made rather a mess.' Sophie looked great in her waitress apron, black skirt, red half-stockings, black Doc Martens, Batman

earrings, Tintin wristwatch.

‘What scene is this?’ ‘The metaphorical pianist.’ ‘Ah yes. The metaphorical pianist.’ In the control room, an argument was going on about the angle of acceptance on Edward Peel. This was technical stuff about camera placement and the viewer’s perception. ‘It’s his shoulders. His shoulders have crossed the line.’

A bit more teeth at the bottom if you can,’ came the instruction to the actor from the control room. ‘Grow them,’ said Ian. Three special effects people pointed fiery hot paint strippers at the wax effigy of Edward’s (Kane’s) face. It began to melt and reveal the skull and muscles underneath. Detergent bottles full of washing up liquid and yellow paint were squeezed and horrible yellow stuff came running out of the melting face.

‘How were the fleeing customers?’ ‘They were fine.’ John Asbridge was up on a stepladder desperately wrestling down the ‘Closed’ sign above the docking bay. Tony Selby said, ‘Have you got the dicky birds there Andrew?’ Rhyming slang again. I handed him the script he wanted, containing the words.

The Arnheim scene, in which the Doctor discusses philosophy with a thuggish guard, was a genuine small masterpiece. I made a point of buying the guy who plays Arnheim a Bacardi and Coke in the BBC Club afterwards. But the scene ran on into overtime and Ann Faggetter told me it cost £700 for the ten-minute overrun. I made the mistake of mentioning this to Ian and, oddly, he insisted on blaming himself. He was terribly upset. He felt that if he’d written simpler dialogue everything would have gone more smoothly. But it wasn’t his fault. Ian could hardly talk. It was just the emotional stress of his story coming to life, being shot. I bought him a brandy. Ian was sitting on the floor of the crowded BBC Club, bereft. Kate Easteal gave him a hand up. ‘Any cheap trick for a bit of physical contact,’ she said, smiling.

The following week, Sylvester was agitating for the leave-taking scene I wrote as his audition piece to be grafted onto Ian’s script as the ending. I’d been resisting it. I felt it just wouldn’t be right there. Besides, Ian might not have welcomed a chunk of someone else’s writing being crow-barred into his story.

The work on the final draft of *Dragonfire* continued as we approached the last studio dates. Kate Easteal was typing out the latest draft. ‘This is quite good. Did you write it?’ ‘No. Ian.’

Friday 7 August 1987. On the phone to Ian bitching about how Chris Clough missed all the nuances in his scripts. ‘There was no problem with Malcolm’s scripts because they didn’t have any nuances.’ This was a trifle unfair on Chris and Malcolm, but not entirely. Ian characterised Malcolm’s scripts as ‘gung-ho’ and perhaps that was a fair description. But gung-ho wasn’t

necessarily a bad thing for a screenplay to be. Straightforward energy and drive and a clear, unambiguous story can translate well into television drama. But it's true that the filming of *Dragonfire* was full of missed opportunities, all of which were present and correct in the script.

The following Monday, I was out in North Acton with Ian for the producer's run of the remaining parts of *Dragonfire*. Coffee smell in the BBC lift. John Nathan-Turner was musing good naturedly; 'What can I say to the press about Sophie? A right little raver and a terrific fuck. We're delighted to have her on board, if only she can stay sober.' Needless to say, John was indulging in some rough and tumble humorous fantasy here. Sophie was outgoing but not *that* outgoing. And, under her extrovert exterior, Sophie was actually a rather dedicated and level-headed actress. She had a terrific quality of vulnerability blended with tomboy toughness. Plus she was very good looking.

Although Sara Griffiths was in the running for a while, it looked as though Sophie was going to be the new companion.

They were still screwing around with Ian's ending for *Dragonfire*. I learned a little lesson here. Because Sylvester was always unwholesomely keen on the leave-taking scene I wrote for his audition, Chris Clough asked me for a copy of it at the rehearsals. I let him have it after some discussion. I thought it was a good scene but wasn't entirely convinced it would work here. I gave them the scene just to prove that it was inappropriate and that Sylvester's memory was playing tricks on him; it wasn't as great as he thought. But of course, the next thing I knew they were photocopying the scene and it was being gene-spliced into the script. 'The lunatics have taken over the asylum,' said John Nathan-Turner.

Wednesday 12 August 1987. The zombie had a hyphenated name (Nigel Miles-Thomas, as it happens). Bonnie Langford was singing *Running Up That Hill*, doing rather a good impression of Kate Bush. We were back in the studio for the last of *Dragonfire*. Ian and I did the final rewrite of the final scene on a napkin in the Red Crush bar. Chris Clough was sitting at the table with us, talking about it. John Nathan-Turner came over and said politely, 'Excuse me, Chris. I think we may have cameras.' 'Oh Christ,' said Chris. They hurried off to the control room.

Sophie said she knew the journalist who had just interviewed Sylvester. 'I met her at the Equity A. M. I was being really raucous and right on.'

On the studio floor, they were climbing the ice face. Sylvester was trying to attract Gary's attention. He raised his hand. 'Please, sir. Can we take the wires off?' Sylvester is a natural acrobat and was happier climbing without the safety wires. Bonnie wandered in. 'Do I have to scream? No?' She wandered

off again.

Sophie stood at the foot of the ice face for the photographers, 'snow' falling on her – Sylvester was crouched by the railing above, sprinkling confetti. 'Visual effects by McCoy.' Ian was happily chatting to the camera crew about maskers and framers. Mike Tucker said, 'See you guys tomorrow.' 'You're not stopping?' 'I've got to build the *Nosferatu*.'

Sylvester was hanging by a wire on the ice face. The powers that be had deemed that it was unsafe to work without wires. 'We want to know where the umbrella is,' said the control room. 'Sucking in my right testicle,' answered Sylvester.

Ian had invited two guests to the studio, two teenage girls from the drama class he taught who were reportedly his models for the character of Ace. 'Would you like to meet Bonnie Langford?' we asked them. 'No, we'd like to meet Philip Schofield' (a teen heart-throb of the day). The girls studied the studio. 'It's like a sweet factory,' said one of them. 'Is sweet factory?' 'All the colours.'

stood up on the gantry making notes in my pocket diary in my microscopic handwriting. Henry Barber, the lighting director, walked past. 'Just you wait. In ten years you won't be able to read that.' Sophie told me about this 'great Batman book' she had bought. She meant Frank Miller's **The Dark Knight Returns**. The zombie was doing some prolonged crouching for the next shot and Gary Downie was saying, 'No matter how big and strong somebody is, their legs will start packing up in this position.'

We finally got to the farewell scene. I sat in the control room with scraps of paper all over me. It was a different gallery (control room), but the words I was hearing over the speakers were the same I had heard in the darkness months ago when I first set foot in a television control room, the night we shot the screen test. When I first joined this madhouse. All those months earlier. Everything coming full circle. Janet Fielding was even here again, sitting in the producer's booth.

'Funny business, time.'

Thursday 13 August 1987. Leslie was surrealistically dressed in his dragon's head and a Noel Coward dressing gown. In the gallery, one lighting technician was explaining the story to another lighting technician. 'It's not really a dragon. It's a bio-mechanoid.' Cathy the property buyer had got some knickers for Ian because Ian was complaining about the lack of strewn underpants in Ace's living quarters. Sylvester was practising his sliding on the plastic snow. John Nathan-Turner was talking to Kate Eastal about the end-of-shoot party that night: 'Just invite some lovelies. No old bitches.' There was Styrofoam snow on the control room floor, tracked in from the studio below.

'Meanwhile there's that poor dragon ~~Æ waiting~~,' said *isi /n + K M ù Shirley Coward, as an endless argument ~~L~~ about Glitz firing a ~~î ù~~ ù the Doctor grabbing ~~àrm~~. 'This ~~gètt~~ing si ly, (~~is~~.' The terrible frustra (n ù pain of (~~K~~ ~~tò~~ convey to ~~ù~~ op e on ~~ù~~ Ø 6 /~~000~~ ù just exactly what you wanted, and just what you could see in the control room. 'Can we have li h s in the alien chamber please.' While Ian was down on the floor socialising, I was perched on a ~~ù~~ chair in the dark gallery, ~~%è~~ ping a D ger on the pulse of the script. Watching the @ ~~The~~ gaffer's blue trousers ~~ù~~ K ~~tù~~rning into trouser-shaped @ / /~~ù~~ the ice cave / ù the CSO. v G / 7 ù 8a~~ù~~* g~~ù~~f~~ù~~B / ùY¹ ù ~~ù~~f ù / ù@ / p 6 ù (flattage upwards [/ ~~ù~~ 8y~~e~~ h. 7~~ù~~ Do we have a single / ù(ù a / @ ~~ghr~~ ù ~~sw~~offering us single.' ~~ì~~ G ~~ão~~ ù the blue, though.' On (he Chro + a %y (the CSO), Ø %~~0~~ pieces of flattage which have & @ % ~~ù~~ ù 6e) outlines painted on dumbfounded us and stopped the entire production until John A r dge, a hero, hastened in with a spray can of yellow paint.

O K / ~~w~~as high. It was madness working so close to the line. It was a ~~ady~~ 9.30 , + ' ~~ù~~ was just silly doing things ~~ì~~ Ž ù ha (~~m~~uch pressure. 'We've got to tweak a lamp.' 'We've / ù ù/* & ù / & + E~~rr~~ought discussion with Ian in a hot corridor. We were trying to change some dialogue to compensate for a fucked-up s , eci l effect (the star chart). Ian wanted to take his time and discuss K ~~ba~~ ù there was no D6@ Q K time. I was freaking now.

The control room H ù / ~~ù~~ know if the actor playing he d a on was out of his costume yet. 'Is Leslie out of h s g m~~ù~~ ù ~~ù~~ out of - K ~~h~~ead for years,' said Sylv. Richard Wilson, the technical coordinator, had a slight problem: 'My machine stayed servo 6 / @ Q ~~Æ~~ ~~ca~~meraman was talking to ~~ù~~director. 'Could you run through the shots, Chris, for we bears of little brain?' The kh i g guy was ta ~~ing~~ about Sophie. ~~ì~~ d 7~~bl~~ack hair, darkly ~~è~~ y ù so M , @~~so~~me solid @ % ù Sophie was holding her ears after B / nie's ep @ ù s @ea + . Ch s C ough said, 'Can we just give them a general note to ~~à~~ 6 ~~à~~ little more Š , ~~ù~~ it?'

'Zi , ? ~~às~~ Sy ~~es~~ er.

The dragon was , ù (ù K , ù ~~ù~~ on every + / (/ 8 ù ù - ~~ù~~ presence in (he darkened control room. The creature was + - ; D ; @ 8 ù ~~des~~ , te steam / ~~ù~~ coming out of one of its nostrils. 'Looks quite nice all that.' 'Excellent.'

a , ù 8~~ù~~ we got it all done ~~ù~~ finished on (+ e. % / ù passed out ù , / ~~è~~ boxes of chocolate / ù * / ù the party and she in turn was presented with a bouquet of flowers. Ian finally got around to giving + ù the bribe he promised if *Dragonfire* / ù made. A box / f mu t @lou e ù ap ~~ù~~ , ù s — ‡ ù labelled ~~script~~ a / w ~~ù~~ e'. The party ù

subdued. Everyone was exhausted. Once we'd gone home, someone broke in and stole the leftover booze.

Tuesday 22 September 1987. “‘Last one back’s a gooey mess.’ I wish I was Ian Briggs sometimes,’ said Ben Aaronovitch. We were watching a rough edit of *Dragonfire* and it was looking wonderful. However, this initial euphoric impression was to fade as I saw more of the footage, in a more finished form and just over a week later...

Wednesday 30 September 1987. I was watching Ian’s episode one with him and aching – aching at the cheapness and nastiness with which it had been shot. I told him, ‘It’s a B-movie, but it’s a good B-movie.’

Thursday 15 October 1987. John Nathan-Turner said, ‘This excellent idea – which Andrew had.’ It was at times like this that John was a great guy to work with. He was happy to give credit where it was due, and not everyone is like that. The idea in question was to use a voiceover on the P. A. in Iceworld to suggest a substantial time lapse between the climax of the story and that final farewell scene we had had so much trouble over. I said, let Ace make a bing-bong announcement. John said, let Glitz do it, and he was right.

On Monday, there was a letter from Ian Briggs waiting at the office. It included a sheet of character notes on Ace for the next season’s writers. ‘I feel as if I’m giving away my only child,’ said Ian. ‘Look after her please.’ Along with the notes on Ace, Ian had also included a photocopy of the famous napkin scene for me. Meanwhile Kate Eastal had been watching a tape of the first episode. ‘I thoroughly enjoyed it,’ she said.

On Friday a couple of weeks later, we got the fine cut and dubbed cassette of *Dragonfire* and Dominic Glynn’s music (I hadn’t known what to expect; but Dominic was a brilliant composer then and has only improved since) was scary and very atmospheric. Plus the script was good and the show was altogether good.

Monday 16 November 1987. I watched *Dragonfire* with Ben and he provided a running commentary, ‘Oh, those ice corridors work quite well. don’t they? Wicked. That’s a good bit of writing. I like that.’

A couple of days later, John and I sat with Colin Rogers for the official viewing of episode two of *Dragonfire*. He said the monster was good (Lindsay’s work) and he talked about Edward Peel (‘Old Eddie Peel’) being a trifle over the top with lines like, ‘After 3,000 years the *Dragonfire* shall be mine.’ He chuckled mildly at the philosophical discussion that Ian wrote, which I thought was crucifyingly funny. And that’s about all he said. This was my favourite episode of the season. I really hadn’t expected Colin to leap out of his seat when he saw it, but he was only mildly pleased. I was beginning to realise that **Doctor Who** was an exercise in masochism. Even when you were good, no

one noticed. I asked Colin what they'd said about the last episode at Programme Review and he said, very gently and kindly, 'They don't watch it, Andrew.'

Tuesday 24 November 1987. There was a superb article on **Doctor Who** in general and *Dragonfire* in particular ('The writing is sharp') in the **Daily Telegraph**.

Don Henderson wrote to congratulate us on the ratings for *Delta and the Bannermen*, enclosing a detailed list of the shows we'd beaten. 'He's obviously studying the top 100 like a banshee,' said John Nathan-Turner. Sitting on the sofa in Colin Rogers' office, John looked like a haggard, chubby Teddy bear. The recent shit-storm of abuse and vicious criticism had actually probably brought people back to watching **Doctor Who** for the first time in years. Bill Cotton told Colin, 'I saw **Doctor Who** this week and it was rather good.'

We watched the third episode of *Dragonfire* and Ian's script was wonderful. Despite my reservations about the way it was directed, it was still the strongest story of the season. Colin Rogers seemed to appreciate how good the writing was. He hated the model work, though. Personally what I hated was that cute little kid.

Thursday 3 December 1987. Ian Briggs sat in my office watching a preview of *Dragonfire* episode three. When it was over, we looked at each other and began to bitch about the way it turned out. The list of scenes which had been butchered was just absurd. Ian said he could sit down and re-edit the episode that night and do a better job. 'It might sound big headed...' said Ian. It didn't. I believed him.

A few days later, my view softened somewhat. I watched episode three for the umpteenth time, as it went out in the evening, and was surprised at how good it was. The departure scene was moving and eerie. Now I could see why Sylvester had been so insistent about incorporating his audition scene in there. It's a wonderful scene for him; maybe his best of the season.

Early in the New Year, as a kind of coda, Ian Briggs was on the phone about his *Dragonfire* novelisation. 'I may have to lose the Iceworld Pussyfresh deodorant for a start,' he said.

NEW SERIES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring **Sylvester McCoy**
in *Nemesis of the Doctor*

Part one of a four-part
adventure by

BEN AARONOVITCH

Andrew meets Ben, the
Daleks appear and racism is
fought.

Rachel.....PAMELA SALEM
The Girl.....JASMINE BREAKS
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Mike.....DURSLEY MCLINDEN
Harry.....HARRY FOWLER
Gilmore.....SIMON WILLIAMS
Allison.....KAREN GLEDHILL
Embery

PETER HAMILTON DYER

Ratcliffe.....GEORGE SEWELL
Headmaster.....MICHAEL SHEARD
Dalek operator HUGH SPIGHT
Voices

ROY SKELTON, JOHN LEESON

Stunt arranger TIP TIPPING

Theme music composed by
RON GRABER

Theme arrangement/incidental music
KEFF MCCORMACK

Costume designer KENTREW

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director ANDREW MORGAN

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* CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring **Sylvester McCoy**
in *Nemesis of the Doctor*

Second part of a
four-part adventure

by **BEN AARONOVITCH**

Just how many bacon
sandwiches is 'four bacon
sandwiches'? Is that four
rounds or one sandwich cut
into four? Harry knows...

Rachel.....PAMELA SALEM
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Headmaster.....MICHAEL SHEARD
Kaufman.....DEREK KELLER
Girl.....JASMINE BREAKS
Mike.....DURSLEY MCLINDEN
Gilmore.....SIMON WILLIAMS
Rachel.....PAMELA SALEM
Allison.....KAREN GLEDHILL
John.....JOSEPH MARCELL
Ratcliffe.....GEORGE SEWELL
Vicar.....PETER HALLIDAY
Dalek operators

JOHN SCOTT MARTIN

HUGH SPIGHT, TONY STARR

CY TOWN

Voices

ROY SKELTON, ROYCE MILLS

BRIAN MILLER, JOHN LEESON

Stunt arranger TIP TIPPING

Incidental music KEFF MCCORMACK

Make-up designer

CHRISTINE GREENWOOD

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director ANDREW MORGAN

* CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 7

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Strong women and no latex.

Friday 22 May 1987. We were in the middle of shooting *Paradise Towers* and had just shot the swimming pool locations at the Iraqi millionaire's deserted mansion in Chalfont St Giles, and I was heading home for the weekend, on the train to Kent, watching rabbits running up a green slope.

I'd just started reading an unsolicited **Doctor Who** script called *Knight Fall* by a maniac called Ben Aaronovitch. Caroline Oulton passed it on to me. I wanted to buy Caroline lunch, with champagne. Ben Aaronovitch's script was so good that I set it aside. I wanted to savour it. Picking up and reading a script like this was like hitting a seam of gold. And I was only on page eight. The possibility of a glowing season of **Doctor Who**, a triumphal tour, appeared before my eyes.

It was a bank holiday weekend, so it was Tuesday before I could see Caroline at the BBC. I was sitting flipping through a copy of Luis Buñuel's autobiography in her large new producer's office (I borrowed the book and I've still got it, Caroline). Caroline had moved up from being a mere script editor. I was waiting for her to finish talking on the telephone. Caroline had a macabre laugh and she used the word 'festive' as a peculiar term of approval.

Caroline discovered Ben Aaronovitch and according to her he was 'a young fat guy whose mum answers the phone'. She met him when he sent in a script called **The Dole Queue Detective**, which was similar enough to **South of the Border** that she felt she owed him an explanation. 'He's completely loopy. I think he even calls me Miss Oulton.' He had such a bizarre imagination that Caroline suggested he write a **Doctor Who**. And the rest is history...

Or at least, it was going to be if I could get through to directory enquiries and obtain his number.

Wednesday 27 May 1987. 'This is Ben Aaronovitch's dad,' said a voice on the **Doctor Who** answer-phone. It had been impossible to find a number for Ben so I took a chance on ringing a Dr Sam Aaronovitch who lived in the same part of London. (Actually, I took a chance on getting Kate Eastal to ring.) And bingo.

Thursday 28 May 1987. It turned out that it wouldn't have mattered which Aaronovitch we'd chosen in the phonebook; they're all related to Ben. Ben took a can of Diet Pepsi out of his blue plastic sports bag. He was talking about **Doctor Who** novelisations. 'I noticed that several of them were by C. P. members.'

'What's C. P.?' I asked.

'The Communist Party.'

Ben Aaronovitch was an interesting character. He pronounced

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now, John thought that those ideas were his, or had at least quietly accepted that they were good ideas.

Saturday 14 November 1987. Ben rang me up at the flat. He was still saying, 'Davros here.' I explained to my girlfriend Kate that Davros was the creator of the Daleks. She said, 'Ben is Davros, in a sense, then, isn't he?' I told her Terry Nation was really the creator of the Daleks if we wanted to get pedantic about it.

On Monday, Ben was sitting in my office watching a duff old monster on a **Doctor Who** story from our video vaults (the much-pilfered and disorganised single shelf in John's office). 'My story is going to have two characteristics – strong women and no latex,' said Ben.

On Wednesday 25 November 1987, I rang up the BBC Gramophone Library to request some 1960s pop music compilations for Ben's Dalek story. I carefully explained who I was and what I was doing; after a long silence, the woman (whose name was Pamela) on the other end flatly refused to issue any records, saying it 'sounds a bit fishy' *and hung up*. At that moment, I felt locked into this sprawling antiquated bureaucracy where there was supposed to be a department to serve your every need but actually they only existed to torment you and make your job harder. I was literally incapacitated with rage. At this point, Ben came into my office and John followed shortly afterwards. Despite my best efforts, Ben and the producer hadn't been getting along very well. Now, as I sat there at my desk, exhausted after feeling so enraged, I wasn't even worrying about how they got along. But the aftermath of the Gramophone Library incident and my weariness seemed to have cleared a sudden space in which everybody could get along. Ben suggested crackling blue voltage from the fingertips of the sinister little girl in his script and John thought it was a great idea. Suddenly the ice was broken.

Maybe it was worth that damned phone call after all.

Monday 30 November 1987. 'You don't know how many positive things I've heard from women about Ace,' said Ben. He lent me a book called **Neuromancer** by William Gibson and that morning (started reading it on the train up from Kent and I kept setting it down and looking out of the window – the book was so good I wanted to savour it. Gibson's novel was a remarkable post-**Blade Runner** vision of science fiction. It was also a superb cynical thriller. And it introduced Cyberspace – a sort of illusional alternative world consisting of the global computer network; an intoxicating vision for anyone who'd ever enjoyed writing software. As I read the book, a whole world of possibilities swept open for me. I had never realised a science fiction novel could be as good as this. It had the quality of the writing of Tom McGuane at times. I wanted to write something like it.

I walked with Ben along Shepherd's Bush Green after a good discussion of his Dalek story. 'Move over *Weng-Chiang*,' he said. 'And mine will be politically correct, too.' Working with Ben was exhilarating. We finished the outline for episode two in an hour. It was a good speedy story conference, both of us bursting with ideas ('That's just what I was about to say').

I asked John Nathan-Turner what colour the things inside the Daleks were. 'A yucky green.'

Friday 18 December a u It was a week before Christmas. As I came into the building that morning, the guy in reception said, 'I think Ben's in already.' Ben had become something of a fixture. He was indeed in already and he gave me his revised and completed Dalek storyline and then went off for a coffee. He'd put a hell of a lot of work into it. I sat reading it at my desk in the quiet, holiday-abandoned BBC building, savouring it.

Ben and I were talking about the draft of the first episode he'd brought in. 'It is a McGuffin,' said Ben. 'It's a well-integrated McGuffin,' I told him. Ben looked blitzed, almost falling asleep in the chair. He'd been up all night finishing this. Some of the dialogue went on too long, but basically it was superb. The first Dalek fire fight was full of splendid detailed incident. I left a draft of Ben's episode one and his outline of the story at the **Doctor Who** office, to be forwarded to Terry Nation in LA. Then I was off to catch the train to Kent for Christmas.

Monday 28 December 1987. After the holiday weekend and still in Kent, I was back on the phone to Ben. 'I went to a well wicked rave-up on Boxing day,' he said, then went on to describe a scene in episode two of his Dalek story: 'You'll quite like it. It's nice and visual... Association types dribble out like rats and converge on him.' (The Association was Ben's version of a British fascist, Oswald Mosley-type organisation.)

The New Year arrived and our work on the scripts continued. 'I'm thinking of fiendish ways of working in the racial purity,' said Ben, who was always on the lookout for a bit of social criticism in his scripts.

Wednesday 13 January 1988. 'It's a textbook example of Communist Party science fiction,' said Ben. He was in my office, returning the cassette of *Frontier in Space*, written by C.P. member Malcolm Hulke. I was reading the latest version of his Dalek episode two while Ben was in the *Doctor Who* office, talking to Kate Easteal and 'having a euphemism' (smoking a cigarette). He'd borrowed my big green **Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction Movies** and his cawing laugh echoed down the corridor.

This was the day of the get-together in the **Doctor Who** office. This was the end result of a lunch I had organised with some of the writers and Sophie Aldred and Lindsay MacGowan, which had made John Nathan-Turner

furious because I had neglected to include him. But he had then decided it was a good idea and instituted a formal get-together with all the directors and writers and Sophie and Sylvester as well.

It was a tremendously good idea for all these people to meet, in John's red office, full of cigarette smoke, with boxes of red wine and stale **Doctor Who** special offer crisps and Kate Easteal's Proclaimers tape on the tape deck. Ben was talking about racism as a gargoyle on the back of his black friends which had to be beaten off with a stick. Stephen Wyatt thought we should employ more short writers – Kevin Clarke, Graeme Curry and Ben are all over six feet tall. Graeme had just arrived from singing the *Messiah* ('Another Messiah,' he sighed) at Abbey Road Studios for Deutsche Grammophon. Sophie Aldred and I were comparing Tintin key rings.

Two days later, and Ben was getting as enthusiastic as a kid as he described the spectacular ending of his Dalek story to John Nathan-Turner and June Collins, our production associate. Listening to Ben's ambitious description, John was being witty about **Doctor Who**'s minuscule budget: 'It would be nice to have some money left to do Stephen's.' As always, a good script conference with Ben.

Wednesday 20 January 1988. I had decided I wanted Ben to follow me as script editor on **Doctor Who**. I didn't really wield any power to make this appointment and I didn't know how to arrange it, but still I was plotting towards it. Ben had a clear vision of the possibilities of the show. He could have been the perfect man for the job.

A week later and the production cycle was starting again. **Doctor Who** was coming to life. Activity in the various offices around me. Alan Wareing was using the phone in the room next door. 'The story, the story, you'll love it. It's about a psychic circus.' Ben was due in to deliver his episode four and hard copies of one to three, but he still hadn't arrived. 'Where's shyster?' asked Kate Easteal, 'Where's shit-face?'

Ben turned up eventually, having spent most of the night writing. He said he was having creative problems until he realised it was just low blood sugar. 'I just went and ate some glucose. Twenty minutes later I was writing fucking episode four.' He went into the **Doctor Who** office to 'have a euphemism' and chat with Kate and I sat reading his episode four, laughing with joy. 'Unlimited rice pudding,' said the Doctor, interrupting Davros's tirade about his plans to take over the universe.

As many fire teams as the budget can stand slam into place,' said a scene direction. I was looking forward to these scripts coming to life, meeting the actors who'd play Rachel, Mike, Gilmore. I wanted to hear these lines spoken.

Ben came and sat in my office, chuckling at his own dialogue. 'I don't remember half these lines because I was asleep when I wrote them.' We did a final fix on the scripts and Ben tottered off home. Kate photocopied the scripts and we taxied them to Andrew Morgan, who was the director for that story.

The following day, which was a Saturday, I rang Andrew to see that he'd got the scripts okay. 'It's a pity they've gone to printing already,' said Andrew. 'But never mind. We can always add the pages with my changes later.' I laughed aloud. The season had started in earnest.

'The game is afoot,' I told Andrew.

John had gone on holiday. I spoke to him at his hotel in Florida (he and Gary had moved on from Honolulu). He was deeply worried about the lack of response from Terry Nation. Terry Nation had given us permission to use the Daleks but he had yet to approve Ben's scripts, or at least Ben's storylines.

The following Monday, Andrew Morgan officially joined the production. His team were across the hallway, in the office directly opposite mine. Andrew was in there saying hello to them. Happy busy voices. They were working on a Dalek story, but Terry Nation had yet to officially grant us permission to make it. He'd deputised everything to his agent Roger Hancock and Hancock had been going to read Ben's scripts over the weekend and give his permission today. I phoned him that morning and his first words were, 'I read the first two [scripts] on Friday and my reaction was, frankly, "Forget it".'

I was polite and charming for the rest of the phone call, but completely freaked out. That night I hardly slept.

But in a couple of days we got the go-ahead from Roger Hancock, who had struck a better deal for his client in the process.

Andrew Morgan came into my office and went through Ben's script. "'Bits of Dalek ricochet around the cellar...'" he read. 'You'll be lucky.'

Thursday a February 1988. The production team were watching a load of old Dalek tapes. The sound of Davros going spare echoed along the corridor. I rang Ben and gave him an update on various script changes being proposed by Andrew. Ben said, 'Don't get uptight. Everyone's stating their bargaining positions. I'm Jewish. We can't lose.'

The production team did a read-through of Ben's scripts that afternoon in John's office, to time them. 'We'll all take it in turn to do Daleks.' 'Grab a Dalek as you go.' Everybody had bright green scripts in their laps as afternoon coloured the sky over Shepherd's Bush.

The following day, Kate Eastal said to Ben Aaronovitch, 'Don't wear plaid boxer shorts under white tracksuit bottoms,' and she was quite right, too. Later she would say, 'I've never heard a script conference with people

laughing before.'

Ben and Andrew and John and I were in John's pillar-box-red office discussing Ben's episodes one and two and I suppose it did go very well, with people laughing pleasantly and me sipping pineapple juice and crunching my health food bars while the other three chain smoked cigarettes. Someone queried a point and Ben paused to think about it. 'I'm trying to recover the logic that got me there,' he said.

Things did hit a snag when John suddenly objected to the Doctor creaming a Dalek with a rocket launcher. Who could object to such a thing?

Tuesday 16 February t u He was pissed. He must have been pissed,' whispered Andrew. John had fallen over the night before and smashed his ribs on his metal Garfield briefcase. Andrew rang up Ben and I joined him on an extension and we had an impromptu script conference. 'Two people on the same telephone and they're both called Andrew,' said Ben. We were talking about the scene John wanted rewritten because all of a sudden he thought it uncharacteristic of the Doctor to blast a Dalek with a rocket launcher. Ben described the rewrite. 'If you do it that way, Ben,' told him, 'You can keep the Doctor's line about humans being expert at killing and put it at the end of the scene.' There was a pause on the line and then Ben said to Andrew, 'You see, Andrew, great minds think alike.'

Thursday 18 February 1988. Ben and I sat in the big empty office at the end of the corridor, 301 Union House, using it as our rewrite office. Working on episodes one and two. 'I want to see this filmed,' said Ben, 'I want the honour and the glory. I want to be interviewed by poisonous fanzines.'

The following day, I had another script conference with Ben, John and Andrew. Despite my admiration for Andrew and John as practical programme-makers, it was obvious that Ben and I were on a different wavelength. They understood how a story works, certainly, but they didn't have any feel for science fiction. They didn't grasp the scale or the potential of what Ben was doing in his script. And, like a lot of other directors I've encountered, Andrew was a highly effective craftsman but at the same time, it seemed to me, had a disturbing immunity to nuance.

John again brought up the issue of the Doctor destroying Daleks, saying it was bloodthirsty and immoral and out of character. And I flipped and we actually came close to shouting. 'I'm already letting you bend the character of the Doctor as much as I can!' said John. Luckily, the guy with my new computer turned up at this point and I had to go into my office to show him where to set it up, which gave me time to cool off. When we resumed after lunch, John had decided to be funny and charming, which he genuinely was, and told us amusing stories about making **Doctor Who**.

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7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *Nemesis of the Doctor*
Third of a four-part adventure
by BEN AARONOVITCH

Ace beats several shades of
cream out of an Imperial
Dalek and the BBC manages
to land a spaceship in a
playground!

Rachel.....PAMELA SALEM
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Mike.....DURSLEY MCLINDEN
Gilmore.....SIMON WILLIAMS
Rachel.....PAMELA SALEM
Allison.....KAREN GLEDHILL
Ratcliffe.....GEORGE SEWELL
Harry.....HARRY FOWLER
Girl.....JASMINE BREAKS
Emperor Dalek

ROY TROMELLY

Dalek operators

JOHN SCOTT MARTIN
TONY STARR, CY TOWN
HUGH SPIGHT

Voices

BRIAN MILLER, ROYCE MILLS
ROY SKELTON, JOHN LEESON

Stunt arranger TIF TIPPING
Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH
Visual effects designer
STUART BRIDON
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer MARTIN COLLINS
Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER
Director ANDREW MORGAN
★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *Nemesis of the Doctor*
The final part of a four-part
adventure by

BEN AARONOVITCH

Davros returns with a plan
involving unlimited rice
pudding, burn marks and a
coffin.

Rachel.....PAMELA SALEM
The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Gilmore.....SIMON WILLIAMS
Allison.....KAREN GLEDHILL
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Mike.....DURSLEY MCLINDEN
Ratcliffe.....GEORGE SEWELL
Girl.....JASMINE BREAKS
Black Dalek operator

HUGH SPIGHT

Dalek operators

JOHN SCOTT MARTIN
CYTOWN, TONY STARR

Voices

ROYCE MILLS, ROY SKELTON
BRIAN MILLER

Stunt arranger TIF TIPPING
Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH
Lighting HARRY BARBER
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer MARTIN COLLINS
Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER
Director ANDREW MORGAN
(Next week *The Crooked Smile*)

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 8

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Unlimited rice pudding.

Wednesday 24 February 1988. There was a fantastic front of grim storm light moving in, swallowing the daylight. Like a black and white photo in the window of the office across the corridor. In a few seconds it had gone from day to night. 'I hope it isn't the end of the world, Ben.' 'If it is, it'll really bugger up the production schedule,' said Ben Aaronovitch, and in the office across the corridor Rosemary Parsons laughed. Ben's found an old girlfriend in **Spotlight**. 'A right div brain. Good in bed though.' He kept looking through the actresses. 'How about her for Allison? She's in the four to a page section. She'll be cheap.'

Our production manager, known only to Ben as 'that white-haired guy', was persisting tenaciously in trying to get us to agree that the scene which it was critical to set in a period junkyard (to tie in with the very first episode of **Doctor Who**) didn't actually have to be set in a period junkyard at all.

Sophie Aldred was on the phone in the **Doctor Who** office and Kate Eastal passed her to me. She wanted to tell me how much she liked the first two episodes of Ben's script. She was surprised at how well written Ace and the Doctor were. She wanted to know what happened after the cliff-hanger of episode two. 'To me, I mean Ace.'

'We kill you off, Sophie,' I told her. It wasn't true.

Kate was on the phone later, dictating John Nathan-Turner's corrections for the **Doctor Who Magazine** proofs. 'In the sentence that reads, "Andrew Cartmel appears to be", insert "Producer John Nathan-Turner and Andrew Cartmel appear to be".'

Wednesday 9 March 1988. I returned to the office after being away ill for five days, and Andrew Morgan called me in for a chat. He looked worried. He showed me the pages for the junkyard location, all of which had to be shot in three days. Then he showed me the pages for the school – also a three-day shoot, but there were more than twice as many pages. Welcome back to **Doctor Who**.

The next day, Ben came in to do yet more revisions on his script and he was weary. 'It's like the NHS,' said Ben. 'There's nothing left to cut.' John Nathan-Turner exploded at Andrew as we sat in his office. 'It's going to be an unhappy show,' he said, 'I just know it's going to be an unhappy show. We offer people good parts and now we're slashing them to buggery. We're going to have unhappy actors.'

'Yes, that worries me too,' said Andrew.

'We've moved stuff out of the studio into the OB [Outside Broadcast]

for you and now you're saying you've got too much OB,' snapped John. 'I'm fed up with this!' John had a point. The rewrites on this script had been endless and Ben was right when he said, 'We've cut all the flab, cut all the unnecessary flesh and waste matter. Now we're cutting healthy living tissue.' Ben liked his National Health Service analogies. 'John, you're being unfair,' said Andrew, 'I just want what we all want. To do the best job possible.'

Personally what I suspected was that Andrew had been somewhat wound up by his production manager and chief prophet of doom ('that white-haired guy'). I was beginning to think that, after all the cuts they'd demanded, the episodes might under-run.

Sophie popped into the **Doctor Who** office to borrow some video tapes of the show. She had a cold or a bug of some kind, maybe glandular fever. 'Don't know what it is.'

'The Green Death, Sophie,' said John.

Thanks to John, we convinced Andrew and his production manager of the simple sanity of taking a day off the three-day junkyard shoot (35 pages) and adding it to what was the three-day school shoot (70 pages). The school shoot had twice as many pages, but it now also had twice as many days. 'Oh no, can't take a day off the scrap yard,' were the white-haired guy's last words on the subject, but that seemed to be what eventually was done.

Monday a March 1988. Working late, I showed Andrew a tape of *Destiny of the Daleks*, directed by Ken Grieve. ('I bet this overran in the studio,' said Andrew.) By now, I'd seen just about every Dalek story ever made and this was the only one – or at least the only one in colour – which succeeded in making the Daleks *look* sinister.

Andrew sat patiently while I wound the tape to the various scenes I'd noted on a list. I hadn't analysed it before, but watching with Andrew it became clear that the reason the Daleks look good in this is that they are seen from low angles or vignetted – just a bit of a Dalek at the edge of the screen, up very close.

'I'll ask for lots of ceilings,' said Andrew, 'and have them in the foreground a lot.' He was obviously taking on board what I was saying and coming up with an intelligent strategy. I couldn't tell whether he was serious or just placating an obvious imbecile, but I hoped the former.

Sylvester McCoy came into the office, praising Ben's script and especially the scenes with the 'No Coloureds' sign and, more importantly, the tea stall scene where the Doctor talks with its black owner John (who would eventually be played, splendidly, by Joseph Marcell). Maybe we'd get to do it after all.

Andrew had some more rewrites he wanted done, what else is new?

But interestingly he'd added a line to Ben's script himself which was a very good, weird Doctor-ish line. 'Maybe Andrew is turning into a science fiction person,' said Ben.

A couple of days later, I saw a woman walk past my office in a blue headscarf. It was Sophie. She, Kate Easteal, Elaine (assisting in the office), Ben and I were going out to lunch together. On the way to the Hat Shop (that's what it was called, but it was a restaurant) I went into the pub to invite John along. He wouldn't join us, but it was just a courtesy gesture really, because last time a bunch of us went out like this without inviting him he'd got annoyed. 'Creep,' whispered Sophie, smiling.

On Friday morning, in the reception area at Union House, Andrew Morgan's team was clustered, standing around waiting for their coach so they could go on a recce. The visual effects assistant was carrying Ace's silver, aluminium-cored baseball bat. I rushed upstairs to ring Ben and tell him.

The following Monday, I'd just cracked a very difficult piece of revision for Ben's script. 'I'm a genius,' I told him on the phone. 'I know you're a genius,' said Ben, 'Get writing you bastard.'

Kate was typing more rewrites for Ben's scripts. 'I must read these scripts. The bits I've read are quite jolly.'

Monday 28 March 1988. We had the read-through at the North Acton Hilton – as the Rehearsal Rooms were nicknamed. The girl who played the spooky little child walked in with her mother. 'Little girl and handler,' whispered Ben. When the little girl started to read the wrong line, Andrew said, 'That's not you. That's another Dalek.' Sylvester was cracking jokes as he hesitated over a line: 'With integral... with integral... I've got double integrals.' It was a calculus joke, at that.

In her first story as a full companion, Sophie was proving to be a deft, effortlessly effective actress. Andrew was reading one of Ben's descriptions from the script: 'Model shot of the Dalek Mothership hanging...' he hesitated. 'Meaty,' said Sophie, providing the next word. 'Hanging meaty and sinister above the Earth,' concluded Andrew. What a terrific description.

When we got to the scene with the battle computer (the little girl collapsing and Ace picking her up, Ben said, 'I think that's one of my most innovative ideas, you know.' Sylvester came to the 'I am more than just a Time Lord' line and delivered it with great power, aiming it like a gun. Sylvester and Sophie were excitedly humming the **Doctor Who** theme as they finished reading the script. They were a terrific team. Sophie with her AirWair Doc Marten bag and Sylvester with his Sylvester and Tweety Pie briefcase.

Ben and I walked to the tube together. We crossed the bridge where we stood in the summer, back when I was still trying to get Ben commissioned and

this story was still just a dream. 'I'm really nostalgic about this bridge,' said Ben. We stood on the platform waiting for the train. 'I'll tell you what I wasn't very happy with,' said Ben. 'I wasn't very happy with the amount of coffee we got.'

Three days later, we had a run-through of the location stuff in Ben's script, which would begin shooting the next week. Sophie in a black T-shirt and black gym trousers swinging a baseball bat at a Dalek. 'All in a day's work,' she said, and struck a pose with the bat. All the Daleks were actually little silver-haired old geezers. 'Scene four,' called Ian Fraser, the new production manager (the 'white-haired guy' had moved on to another project). 'I'm lost, dear,' joked Andrew Morgan, 'What's that?'

Sophie and Sylvester were great together. They were obviously going to be a hit. There was a prop labelled 'Hand of Omega' which someone had altered to read 'Hands off Omega'. The Dalek procession with the coffin looked eerie, even with the little old men in their acrylic jumpers.

On Monday 4 April 1988, we started shooting. They'd opened the pub especially for **Doctor Who**. I was watching the Daleks roll out of a very nice period warehouse yard on sheets of plywood. They wobbled. They bumped into the gates, their heads came off, the visual effects assistants had to grab their 'arms' and drag them out of shot at the end of the plywood. And did I mention they wobbled?

Ah, the other fifth wheel,' said Ben as I arrived. It's true, the writer and script editor weren't exactly regarded as a vital part of the working team by this stage of the production. Cool empty London street, a small Waterloo street, south of nowhere in the warehouse area on a quiet bank holiday Monday morning. Sophie joined us, her hair scraped back and plaited, her face radiant and beautiful, pale with make-up. The Daleks wobbled some more as they come off the plywood. 'Go for it, Daleks,' shouted Sophie. Ben lit a cigarette.

I suddenly realised to my horror that I'd rather be here in this cold South London street under a grey sky watching the Daleks fuck up for the umpteenth take than cosy at home in the bosom of my family, warm and asleep.

I'd got up at the dead-man crack of dawn that morning to get there and of course British Rail screwed up and cancelled the train I was on. I sat around for an hour on stalled trains and cold platforms, writing story notes on my laptop computer.

They finally got the shot right. I turned and asked Ben, 'Was that good for you?' 'I'm smoking a cigarette, aren't I?' The Special Weapons Dalek had an unholy epoxy paint and plastic special effects smell. The floating, howitzer-bearing weapons platform in Ben's script had become, for budgetary reasons,

the Special Weapons Dalek, a mean-looking, rust-stained, big-gunned, sort of First World War-style of Dalek – a splendid piece of visual effects design by Stuart Brisdon. I also loved his rust-crusted coffin for the Hand of Omega. However, things weren't all perfect. There was the matter of those wobbly wheel mechanisms on the standard Daleks and the heads that kept popping off.

I was standing there thinking that it didn't matter how good the scripts were, all those months of work by Ben and me, if the Daleks wobbled.

There was the smell of cut wood in the timber yard. One of the extras playing the Association men was black. I couldn't believe it. The whole point about the Association was that it was intended to be a fascist, racist, National Front, Oswald Mosley Blackshirt type organisation. Did no one read the fucking scripts? Did no one care? Oddly, Ben didn't seem too bothered. He said that these types of racist organisations do sometimes have black members. I found this hard to believe but, as usual, it turned out he was right.

John Nathan-Turner was watching Sophie on the monitor. 'Find the camera, you dizzy cow.' 'That noble profile,' said Ben looking at Sophie's face. Her Batman earring appeared on the monitor screen in close-up. 'Remember this is all creepy-creepy,' said Andrew Morgan, 'Little children behind the sofa for this one.'

There was grit sifting down onto me, squatting down in this warehouse yard to watch the monitor they'd set up in an abandoned outdoor toilet. Activity all around me. 'Dalek plonkers in shot.' 'Where's the reflectors, Danny?' 'We'll lose the wobble in the editing.' I certainly hoped so.

Escargots for lunch in a clean, warm, white bus decorated with video nasty posters (**Driller Killer**, etc). Sophie was signing autographs for a gang of little kids on BMX bikes. I joined her. 'Is that your boyfriend?' asked a little kid. 'No, he helps to write the scripts,' said Sophie. I thought that was a pretty good, succinct job description. A black woman was teaching her little sons how to pronounce 'Daleks'.

The chemistry between Sylvester and Sophie was great. Even from the first seconds, it was obvious they were going to be magic as a team. The viewing public wouldn't know what hit them. It would be the greatest thing since Diana Rigg and Patrick Macnee in **The Avengers**. The next season of **Doctor Who** wouldn't be a hit, I thought; it would seep into the public consciousness like a slow-acting drug. The season after would be huge.

Sophie showed me the **Watchmen** badge she'd added to her jacket. Sylvester the anarchist tried to get me to join them in the garden where they were hiding, just before a take.

The camera was mounted on the back of a blue Citroen 2CV. The car's brake lights flared as it was pushed into position. We were in a tunnel directly

beneath Waterloo East station. Stuart Brisdon detonated a Dalek at the far end of the road. (I should perhaps mention here that when I asked Mike Tucker and Lindsay MacGowan about Stuart, they said, 'He's good at bangs.') There was a vast explosion. The tunnel became a mouth of fire. Massive sound. A wave of black smoke. Fragments of Dalek flying through the air. An alarm began to ring above us, on the railway platform. Sirens in the distance. Within a minute and a half, the emergency services had begun to arrive. The police, four fire engines. Local people were pouring out of the council estate across the road. John Nathan-Turner and Ian Fraser were walking around looking like guilty schoolboys.

Later I was reading the script, waiting for a tube going home. The girl on the bench beside me leant over. 'Someone said they were bringing the Daleks back. I'm BBC as well. When's it going to be transmitted?' Smell of naphthalene on my hair.

The second day of shooting fell on my birthday, 6 April. I arrived on location and walked around to the catering wagon to see if they'd got any breakfast left. I walked back with a sausage bun. As I passed a van, the back doors sprang open. Sylvester and Sophie were inside. 'Good morning, Andrew,' said Sophie. 'Pull him in here with us,' said Sylvester mischievously. They dragged me into the back of the van and I hid under a seat, clutching my sausage butt as the engine started and we roared forward into a take.

This location was the back yard of the Living Steam Museum on Green Dragon Lane in Kew. The museum was the site of a BBC visual effects Christmas disco that Kate Druce and I went to. The back yard was full of junk. Steam engines. Flakes of rust floating in rainwater pools in the metal grooves of big abandoned machinery. Sylvester and Sophie leapt out of the back of the van. They got the take. I emerged from hiding. The sun came out over the Steam Museum. I grabbed an upright pole as I pulled myself into the van. The pole was attached to the dummy aerial on the top of the van. The aerial was now considerably lower than it had been. I may have been immortalised in a continuity fuck-up.

'It's my birthday today,' I told Sylvester. 'I wanted to do something special, like come to work stoned. But I didn't think it would make any difference.' 'You have done something special,' said Sylvester, 'You left half your sausage bun in the back of the van.'

Sylvester delivered his line – 'What's the situation?' – and opened the side door of the van. He opened it energetically. In fact, so energetically that he pulled it completely off the van. 'We won't have any more door acting,' said Andrew.

'I'm going to get my chunky gun out,' said the actor playing Group

Captain Gilmore, Simon Williams. He was taking the piss out of one of Ben's scene directions. 'Do you want me to arrive, or shall I be there?' he asked Andrew. 'Arriving, please,' said Andrew.

A stuntman flew backwards through the air on a wire as a Dalek shot him. The stuntman hit a wall of corrugated tin and slid down. Spontaneous applause. On the corrugated junkyard walls were tatters of posters: 'No More Apartheid Murders', with photos of the victims and the dates. One of the kids was killed on my birthday, 6 April 1979.

Ben said, 'I do like that truck, man. It's such a mean-looking truck.' The truck disgorged soldiers. Ben had named the Special Weapons Dalek 'Christina' because he said it reminded him of an ex-girlfriend. Simon Williams and Sylvester showed us coin tricks at lunch. Sophie talked about the poll tax. Ben was wearing a bright cotton shirt with African motifs on it. 'I hate this shirt,' he said, 'It was bought for me by the Special Weapons Dalek.'

I still have a folded page of yellow script from that shoot with a map printed on one side with the legend: 'Totters Lane Junkyard Location... Wed 6th & Thu 7th April'. There's a big fat arrow pointing to the Kew Bridge Steam Museum. On the other side I've written a note to myself: 'Early Warning synopses and blurbs for Autumn Launch brochure'.

Monday, 4 April 1988. We were doing the second block of location shooting, at the school on Macbeth Street. Sophie cheekily pinched Ben's bottom. She stood happily swinging her baseball bat on top of the wooden stairs. When they performed the Ace-Mike argument it made my eyes sting with tears. Sylv produced a calling card out of thin air. Ben was chuckling uncontrollably at his own lines.

Sophie opened all the remaining windows in the chemistry lab to get the cigarette smoke out. Sylvester was leaning out one of the windows. He said 'enjoy the view' as a nubile black woman swayed past in tight jeans. Andrew came in and sighed over his shoulder. I overheard some discussion of a future location shoot and I heard the word quarry and my heart sank.

Another few yellow scraps of script record my impression of the studio shoot (on the other side of the script are some scenes in the Dalek Mothership Bridge, with some additional Dalek dialogue written in by hand: 'Davros will save us. Where is Davros?')

Thursday. Here's a picture of me, a snapshot in time as I set off to the BBC for the *Remembrance of the Daleks* studio filming. It was morning at my girlfriend's flat and I was flossing my teeth, listening to Bo Diddley, gloriously happy about the Dalek story though a little worried that I was becoming infatuated with the lovely Sophie. I stepped out into the street and it was a

glorious day. Cherry blossoms were falling on my face. It was the last daylight I'd see for a while. We were now shut up in the studio in Television Centre.

The screen in the Dalek shuttle had the BBC test card of the little girl on it (just like you'd get when the BBC was off the air for the night). A surreal moment. Sophie was running around in striped trousers and a tank top, wielding her baseball bat, with a look of horror on her face. 'Human female is now leaving the building. Exterminate.'

Between takes, the unreconstructed male cameramen were scanning Sophie's breasts, her crotch, her Tintin wristwatch as she sat on the stairs. She was looking spectacularly and wonderfully anachronistic in the 1963 suburban parlour in her 1980s workout gear.

Andrew was talking to Scott Talbot, our sound man. 'Scott are you going to do some ding dongs? Are you going to do that for us? Doorbells?' Andrew had staged the staircase conversation between the Doctor and Ace brilliantly, with soldiers bursting between them at intervals to give a sense of urgency and authenticity. They were making a considerable noise, though. 'Can I just say fairy feet again? Especially to the soldiers.'

'Is that wire meant? Sorry? That wire by Sophie's feet. Is it meant?' Sylv lost his concentration, distracted by some movement by one of the soldier extras. 'The Hand of Omega is the mythical name for... someone's playing with his helmet down there.' General laughter.

'We're going to split the feeds on this, so Camera 4 you'll be on the ISO. Can we have the dead Dalek in the back of 4's shot?' I sat in the gallery, watching a white Dalek going up a set of stairs in a cellar set. Dave Chapman was watching billiards on his TV monitor, waiting for the shoot to reach the point where his visual effects expertise was needed. Voices from the studio floor echoed in the darkness. 'No, we have to do it again because of a boom shadow, darling.'

On the monitor, there was an eerie frozen image of the little girl in mid blast in a suburban doorway. While we waited for the next shot, the little girl talked to the stuntman about living dangerously: 'How many miles an hour does it go?' she asked. Not that many.

Ben was sitting with me, uncharacteristically subdued and pale. He'd thrown up with the stress. We were watching the little girl stalk Ace. It's a striking scene. It ends. In the control room silence afterwards (said, 'Well it scared me.' Ben said, 'It's creepy, man. I don't want children anymore.' We were both in awe of Jasmine Breaks, who played the sinister little girl (later revealed to be the Dalek battle computer). Ben asked Andrew, 'Where did you find her? An agency called Creepy Kids?' 'She is good, isn't she?' agrees Andrew Morgan.

But it wasn't just Jasmine Breaks who was brilliant. This whole story was superior. There was the BBC 1963 call sign up on the shuttle screen, with angular Dalek 'Arabic' script across it. I decided that **Doctor Who** is wonderful in cosy suburban surroundings. The contrast of the frightening and familiar, the alien and domestic, is great.

John Nathan-Turner gave a longspiel about why Sophie's Tintin watch would have to go. Apparently it looked like a prop in one of his earlier **Doctor Who** stories. There seemed to be a bit of conflict between John and Sophie at the time. Shame about that watch. She'd be upset to part with it. Meanwhile, on the control room screen, Sophie looked positively Pre-Raphaelite and radiant with her hair loose in the artificial morning sunlight of the parlour set.

Sophie's big scene commenced. It was interrupted almost instantly by drilling from somewhere in the dark mass of Television Centre. We all stopped and stared up in silence. The savage sound of the drilling spread through the big metal beams of the cathedral-like building, like a big insect buzzing. We ground to a halt.

The next day we were back in the studio.

Pamela Salem and Karen Gledhill (Rachel and Allison) walked by in curlers, carrying a TV. In the warehouse with George Sewell, I had the ticklish feeling we were doing something really wonderful. Sylv and Sophie inspected the glittering plasma globe that our prop department had bought to serve as the time controller. 'It's like the inside of my head,' said Sylvester. No. Sylvester, what it was really like was a naff prop that someone with no understanding of science fiction thought was futuristic and which would already be dated and old fashioned before this episode was even broadcast.

Technicians moving cables, slapping them on the floor to avoid the Daleks running over them. Camera rehearsal: Sylv was clutching a baseball bat and leaping out of a dry-ice-filled coffin. Jasmine Breaks was sitting behind a camera, wearing a seatbelt (to keep the little kid from toppling off), talking to fanzine reporters. Lynn Grant, the assistant floor manager, was having her back massaged by an off-duty Dalek. Fucking London Transport made me miss the smashing of the transmat.

'That was a little slow.' 'There was a boom shadow in the mid-shot.' In the gallery you could look from a control screen depicting the battle computer and the black Dalek to Dave's TV featuring Mrs Thatcher and the transition seemed terrifyingly natural.

Andrew was so tense he took a bar of chocolate out of his bag and began to glumly crunch it. A sign of extreme strain in our normally unflappable director.

'Time controller on please. Thank you.' I loved the idea of the Doctor

zapping the time controller, of his unearthly powers. During the warehouse interior scenes, I sat in the gallery muttering, 'Lovely, lovely, lovely.' 'I want one of those for my coffee table,' said Shirley the vision mixer, referring to the time controller (a chintzy globe with electrical sparking effects inside it). Actually, I still thought that in a few months she'd be able to have one and this prop would seem about as exotic and futuristic as the digital clocks you see in 1960s futuristic movies, huge lumbering behemoth tape drive mainframe computers or a lava lamp. People in **Doctor Who** just didn't understand science fiction or real science technology.

Ben had gone down and fetched tea for everyone in the gallery. 'Thank you mum, thank you dad,' said John.

Memo from Turner: there was a memo from John lying around complaining about Sophie's badges on her costume. Ace's bomber jacket featured an assortment of badges, both as souvenirs of her travels and a kind of advertisement of her personality. The problem was that Sophie had been adding some badges of her own without going through channels (ie the costume department) and there had been continuity problems as a result. And John had flipped. When I walked into the producer's booth, I found John and Alan Wareing talking about Sophie. 'And now she's complaining because I won't let her have a late-night taxi.' Alan waves a disgusted, dismissive hand. For some reason, perhaps because this was the first proper story they'd done together, John and Sophie were totally in conflict. John talked to me about Sophie, and he was being very diplomatic and good about it all. But he said, 'It's the worst relationship I've had with any of the companions.' God knows why they'd got each other's backs up, but they had. Maybe it was just because they were such different people. A sort of ideological difference. I wished they weren't at loggerheads. They weren't for long. Sophie and John would bury the hatchet over several drinks in a country pub during the shoot for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* and they remained on good terms thereafter.

Sylvester was brilliant at being scary with the coffin, talking to it. Watching him, I decided I should write a script for **Doctor Who** and call it *Unearthly Powers*.

Ben and Kevin Clarke were interviewed for a US fanzine. 'My interview was a model of evasion,' said Ben. 'They were both very good,' said Kate Easteal.

'We're losing time,' said Andrew. 'I'm getting concerned.' Ian Fraser said, 'You're not the only one.' Martin Collins, the designer, was because they were threatening to shoot his set (the Bridge on the Dalek Mothership) without the special neon lights he'd painstakingly designed and built – because they couldn't find the plugs. He was threatening to go down to the studio and

stand in the middle of the set so they couldn't shoot it until someone did find the plugs and they could switch the neons on. Time was running out but Martin was entirely in the right. He had worked hard on the lighting design and he knew it'd be great and he refused to just abandon it. Where were those bloody plugs? Finally, they were found, the neon lights went on, and the shooting continued.

I was sitting here in the warm womb-darkness of the control room watching the action unfold on the Dalek Mothership. This whole scene – the Dalek bridge, the map, angular Arabic scrolling on the screen, the Emperor Dalek – all assumed the lineaments of a dream I once had. *Déjà vu* amidst the gallery chatter.

'What's on desk effects Dave? Anything useful?' 'Am I breaking up?' 'You were but you're better now.' 'Will you tell Terry he forgot to say "Prepare the Assault Shuttle?"' 'Andrew Morgan – lighting here. Does the transmat come on during this scene?' Terry Molloy as Davros asked, 'Do I take my cue for closing the shutter from the screen going out of focus?'

John suggested another way of doing a shot on the Dalek bridge which just wasn't working ('It's just inanimate objects talking'). John was absolutely right – and I was beginning to understand why. Learning the grammar of television storytelling was like learning a new language.

It was 9.30 at night. 'Why is Ian talking in a Dalek voice?' asked Ben. 'Shut up Ben, please,' said Andrew.

Sylvester was repeating the final scene. Pam Salem was saying, 'You weren't ready that time.' She added firmly, 'Tell them in the control room to wait.' 'Supportive actors week,' said Sophie with approval, sitting beside me in the gallery.

Then it was over. Once again, despite the odds, we'd managed to do it all. Champagne in the BBC Club bar. Sylvester drinking champagne and Guinness.

Months later, more than a little battle scarred, I sat with John Nathan-Turner for the viewing of *Remembrance of the Daleks*. The viewing was a ritual in which the producer and the script editor sat down with the head of drama series and serials at the BBC so he could check on their output. The former head of drama was Jonathan Powell who had now moved on to a more lucrative and powerful position. The man we were dealing with now was Mark Shivas, an experienced and respected producer who had made his name with **The Six Wives of Henry VIII**, which had been a big international hit for the BBC.

Doctor Who clearly was not Mark Shivas' top priority, but he sat and watched the episodes with us patiently enough. I was rather excited because

one of the best and finest moments in *Remembrance of the Daleks* was coming up. It was the scene where Ace is at the boarding house and discovers a sign on the window which says 'No Coloureds'. I was very proud of this scene, which I thought gave an authentic insight into the racist attitudes of the period and powerfully showed Ace's repugnance for them. The look of horror and disgust on her face is clear.

I felt it was a superior and unusually adult dramatic scene for our show and I was keen for Shivas to see it and give us his reaction to it.

So John and I were sitting on the sofa in Shivas' office, watching the tape with him, and the No Coloureds sign scene was coming up. It was just about to begin, when Shivas' phone began to ring on his desk.

'Excuse me,' he said, 'keep watching.' Shivas went to his desk and took the call. The No Coloureds scene unfurled on the screen. Shivas was on the phone, preoccupied with the conversation. His back to us. The scene ended. The story moved on to the next scene. Shivas' phone call ended. He rejoined us. He'd missed the whole thing.

I was aghast and furious, so I did something unprecedented for a script editor in a viewing. I insisted that the head of drama *rewind the tape and watch the bloody scene*. John looked at me with a combination of astonishment and amusement. But Mark Shivas indulged me. He rewound the tape. He watched the scene. He looked at me.

All he said was, 'You should have had her tear up the sign.'

Maybe he was right.

Just before *Remembrance of the Daleks* was transmitted, John took Ben out to the Bush, the local pub for BBC drama series and serials. He proceeded to buy Ben drink after drink, getting him drunk as a skunk, and telling him story after story about true transmission disasters that had befallen shows in the past.

Ben reeled home, deeply intoxicated and profoundly paranoid, to join a riotous party of his friends, get drunker still, and watch the first episode of his first television script go out without a hitch.

CHAPTER 9

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I love his mad laugh.

The Greatest Show in the Galaxy represented a watershed in my thinking on **Doctor Who**. With the previous story in production, *Remembrance of the Daleks*, I had felt we were providing first rate scripts and providing them for the best incarnation of the Doctor in years, if not decades. On top of all this, and we had just signed up a new companion worthy of this new Doctor. All the elements were in place.

From this point on, I was less caught up in the process of shooting of each episode. The novelty of that had worn off. I had realised that as a script editor there was a limit to how much effect I could have on a show once shooting began. There wasn't much more I could do without becoming a director or a producer and either of those possibilities was some years away.

So from now on my policy was create the best script possible and see how it fared in the production process. As I said, all the elements were in place. Now we had to see if the shows lived up to these elements.

As a result, starting with *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* I was increasingly critical of failures in the design and special effects, traditionally the Achilles heel of **Doctor Who** – and areas where as a script editor I had little influence. I always felt we had provided the best raw materials and it was unspeakably frustrating to see how often the resulting shows didn't live up to their promise.

One story that succeeded was *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*, a title I never liked and one that is ironically unworthy of the show it denotes. One reason for its success was that it showed some brilliance in the areas of design; the quality of the make-up and the costumes added immeasurably to its impact.

The creation of *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* began on 6 May 1987. I was sitting in conference with John Nathan-Turner and Stephen Wyatt just after we had wrapped the shooting of *Time and the Rani*. Stephen's script for *Paradise Towers* had turned out well and we were going to commission him to do another story for the next season. That was the good news. But my blood ran cold when I heard about the story that John was proposing. While I had been blissfully on holiday in Spain with my girlfriend, sitting in the sunshine on thyme-scented hills, John was talking to Stephen about a story set in a fairground.

I couldn't imagine a worse location. It was so trite and kitsch and boring. As I said, my blood ran cold. But halfway through the meeting, which proved to be a rather dead-end discussion, John suddenly said, of his own volition, 'I'm going off the idea as we talk about it.'

So we ended up with a circus instead of a fairground. A circus was also trite and kitsch and boring, but to my thinking universes better than a fairground, especially since we had the **Circus of Dr Lao** (Charles ³ 3Finney's marvellously waspish 1935 fantasy novel) as a reference point.

A week later, I was still thinking about the new story. I decided I needed to get hold a copy **The Circus of Dr Lao**. It's a vinegary classic of sardonic dark fantasy and I thought it could have a bearing on the fairground story which John and Stephen seemed intent on cooking up. Circuses and fairgrounds as a locale turned me off. But if we had to do a story like that, we should do it well.

There are certain honourable antecedents in the genre: Ray Bradbury's **Something Wicked This Way Comes** which followed Finney's wonderful book. I wanted Stephen to read **Dr Lao**. I didn't have a copy of the book in London, and the Fantasy Centre in Holloway didn't have a second-hand copy in stock, so I phoned an old flame of mine, Linda Simpson. I felt a strange pang of nostalgia. I knew she'd have a copy because the book was sort of part of our whole love story. Some people had songs. We had this book.

We biked Linda's copy of the book over from Plaistow and I passed it on to Stephen.

A few days later, Stephen and I went for lunch in the Television Centre restaurant and talked about the book. I wasn't proposing that Stephen borrow from it for his story. I wanted him to soak up its mood and see the possibility for a fairground setting in a dark fantasy story. Stephen wasn't especially knocked out by the book. He changed the subject and said he thought that we should collaborate on creating some fabulous hit series and sell it to the Americans and get very rich. He daintily picked up his lamb chop and gnawed the meat off it in a few quick, savage movements.

The next day, at the office, I was talking to Stephen, feeling happy about this circus story. I rang him up that morning to tell him that I'd had an idea that just about solved all the problems for us. Stephen chuckled. 'The support system for writers is very good on this show,' he said.

Three months later and *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* was still in the discussion stage. Stephen and I and my girlfriend Kate Druce and her mum went to see Circus Oz in Waterloo, ostensibly as further research for Stephen's script. Circus Oz were amazing. Black lights and didgeridoo music, women in business suits crawling like spiders, a Raymond Chandler hardboiled detective story vignette performed upside down, hanging from the ceiling, a guest appearance by Death and his slaves ('Come on Wayne, come on Rupert. I tire of this. Back to the Pentagon.')

Back at the office in Shepherd's Bush, I'd arranged a lunch with Sophie

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‘A Sophie Aldred?’ I was clutching at straws.

‘Yes.’

‘Send her up.’

By December, Stephen had delivered all four episodes and John had read them. In episode three, an obnoxious little brat (the Whizzkid) who’d collected all the Psychic Circus’ posters, etc, got splatted. ‘I adored the barker,’ said John happily as he read this.

In the New Year, we began gearing up to go into production on *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*. Stephen’s script was full of good satirical detail, like the mysterious miniature robot that breaches the TARDIS’s defences and materialises in the control room. We expect it to be some kind of malign invader or booby trap. But instead it’s an advertising robot which comes bearing a junk-mail type message, inviting the Doctor and his companion to the Psychic Circus. This was all rather prescient of Stephen, with the junk-mail robot as a sort of premonition of the spam which would be clogging everybody’s computers a couple of decades later.

For the shoot, the robot was built in two versions, a full-size model by Tony McKillop and some miniatures made by the estimable Mike Tucker, whom I was delighted to have back on the show.

The Greatest Show in the Galaxy was one of two four-episode stories that season, which meant it was shot half on location and half in the studio. The rumours I’d heard during the shooting of *Remembrance of the Daleks* proved true and the location work on *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* took place in a quarry. Specifically Warmwell Quarry in Dorset. Quarries were the bane of **Doctor Who** but this one was much more visually arresting than most and Alan Wareing’s skilful direction put it to good use. The shots of the sand dunes when the Doctor and Ace first arrive are breathtaking and convincingly alien. And the green water of the man-made lake provides an arresting backdrop. It’s a shame that the TARDIS prop looks as abjectly battered and shabby as it does when it appears on the dunes.

I went on location with Stephen Wyatt on a cool grey day and found Sophie running around the quarry to keep warm while the rest of us were huddling around heaters. I was impressed. It had never occurred to me that this was an alternative way to warm oneself up. But Sophie was always sporty and athletic, a feisty Fenland belle who went in for running, cycling, canoeing.

The Greatest Show in the Galaxy is a good story with a lot of strong elements. Surprisingly, it begins with an early example of rap music, although at that time we probably would have called it electro or hip-hop. In this first scene, Ricco Ross’ Ringmaster chants a rhythmic introduction to the story, to a

backbeat. Ricco was an American actor with an impressive track record. He had appeared in **Hill Street Blues** and was also one of the Colonial Marines in James Cameron's **Aliens**.

I think that at the time Stephen was concerned about Ricco's less-than-musical delivery. But over the years it's added a certain contemporary grittiness to what might otherwise be an utterly fantastical story.

For me, *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* was in the tradition of the dark fantasies of writers like Ray Bradbury, Charles G. Finney and Robert Bloch. And like all good dark carnival stories, it used sinister clowns to good effect. The early sequences in *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*, featuring the Chief Clown in undertaker's garb and driving a hearse, are remarkable. They're reminiscent of classic British television fantasy such as **The Avengers** or **The Prisoner** (particularly the opening sequence of the **The Prisoner** where he is gassed and kidnapped by men in undertakers' garb). This all immediately put *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* on a whole new level.

There is also a hint of **Quatermass** in the ancient stones that the Doctor spots in the main ring of the circus. These stones reveal the connection of the circus with a bloody arena where men died for the delectation of the Gods of Ragnarok. The Gods are present in the story from the beginning, in the bodies of a normal-looking family who insatiably demand entertainment. The 1940s suburban dowdiness of the family was a masterstroke of costume design echoing Terry Gilliam's **Brazil**. (Stephen and I were both big fans of **Brazil** and he once gave me a copy of the screenplay.) Luckily when the family turn into the dark gods in the final episode, their new costumes also turn out to be pretty effective.

I wanted *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* to follow the strategies I'd been formulating, to try and make the story foolproof in design terms. I'd seen how unpredictable aliens and monsters were on **Doctor Who**, so I wanted the characters, as far as possible, to be human beings.

We still needed some science fiction antagonists, naturally, so Stephen and I drafted a couple of robots into the story. There's the metal bus conductor, ably played by Dean Hollingsworth, for whom Stephen wrote with considerable wit, giving him double-edged lines of dialogue that were drawn from the spiel of real conductors on London's red double-deckers. 'Hold tight,' says the conductor as he throttles Flower Child (Dee Sadler) to death. These lines gave a resonance and menace to the character which his robot outfit was lacking. The costume, designed by Steve Bowman, may not convince, but Stephen's eerily empty, jaunty characterisation does. And the robot does explode very nicely at the end.

I had concluded that robots were better than men in rubber suits. I

was partially right. But even robots can fail to convince. In *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* we had two approaches to the challenge, and neither of them entirely worked. The bus conductor was a man in a costume. The second robot was gigantic, and was built by Jim Lancaster out of a steel framework with air rams to move it. The idea was that this giant robot was buried in the sand, an idea which added to the interest of the robot: it was like a savage animal which was trapped and it gave it a back story, making us wonder why the robot was buried in the first place. In fact the story later revealed that Bellboy built the robot and, in a clever development, he gives Ace a remote control to operate the lethal machine, and turn it against her adversaries. 'Plus, of course, by burying the damned thing in the sand we don't have to build all of it. It will save us all kinds of money.'

It was a clever idea, but it pretty much went for nought. The robot doesn't move especially well, never looks scary and never manages to menace the characters or the audience. 'It also doesn't help that it has those naff bolts coming out of its eyes,' I remarked, and it's true, the video effects are far from impressive in this strand of the story. But elsewhere there are some gorgeous and truly stunning video effects, when Sylvester is struggling through the passage between the tents – and also between the dimensions – travelling to the Dark Circus where the evil gods of Ragnarok hold sway.

Visually, *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* generally stands up very well. The make-up and the costumes are of the highest calibre, showing imagination and flair and real feel for the story. They are elegant, convincing and expressive. We even managed to carry off one entirely successful monster. I was never entirely against monsters. But I was generally in favour of humanoid monsters that were as close to a real unadorned actor as possible (and were therefore as difficult to fuck up as possible). And a werewolf fell into this category.

John Nathan-Turner was on the phone to Stephen Wyatt, discussing the casting in Stephen's script. They were talking about the female punk werewolf. 'Do you think it's vital that she's Scottish?' asked John.

I have to say that the female punk Scottish werewolf in Stephen's script was my influence, as indeed had been the Kangs in *Paradise Towers*. John was concerned that the character might be too comedic, so she was toned down, which I felt was a bit of a shame. A punkette lycanthrope with a Scots accent might well have been funny, but it seemed to me to be the *right kind* of funny. If people laughed, they would be laughing because we wanted them to, not in response to some misfired special effect or unconvincing monster.

I felt John was worrying about the wrong thing here. But nonetheless, the character of Mags survived in a somewhat watered-down form and was

played to good effect by the excellent Jessica Martin. It's a shame we ditched the Scots accent, though, since Jessica was an accomplished comedienne and could have pulled off that character nicely.

From the beginning, we had a feeling that the creative talents of the BBC might be able to carry off a werewolf successfully – there were certain cultural and mythological reference points for such beasts that would help the designers. 'They're not just another alien monster from just another inadequately imagined planet.'

It also helped that the intention was always to keep Mags as human looking as possible, with the minimum of transformation (eyes, talons, some sprouting hair). We weren't trying to change her into a wolf or even a Lon Chaney Jr-style hairy beast. She would remain obviously human, with some strategic and hopefully terrifying exaggeration and mutation.

But what helped even more than this careful tactical planning was our good fortune, and John's cunning, in getting us the crack team of Ros Ebbutt and Denise Baron. With costume and make-up talent like that we ended up with a great show indeed.

And their version of the vulpine Mags was striking, eerie and delightfully terrifying. For once we had a **Doctor Who** monster that was actually scary. John looked up at me after we'd both just watched the transformation on a preview tape. 'We are going to get complaints about this you know. Mothers with terrified children.'

He was right, too. But, to his credit, John stuck to his guns. He didn't bowdlerise it and we ended up with a great monster on the screen, all fangs, claws and glowing eyes. (This is the way the Cheetah People should have looked in *Survival*.)

There were other great monsters in the story, though, and they were all human. Ian Reddington played the Chief Clown with immense threatening panache. 'I love his mad laugh,' said Stephen.

Ian embroidered his part with laughter and gestures which reinforced all our own feelings about sinister clowns (Ace accurately describes them as 'creepy'). Ian was immeasurably assisted by the great costume and make-up which Ros and Denise had provided for him. His clown face was so sinister that they took a cast of it and used it to make masks for the robot clowns who do his bidding.

The cast for *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* was uniformly strong, with Chris Jury making a powerful impression despite minimal dialogue as Deadbeat/Kingpin and there's an amusing moment where he gets knocked to the ground and can be heard to mutter a whispered but distinct 'Shit' on the soundtrack. Peggy Mount plays the Stall Lady (Stephen gives her a witty line

where she refers to Hell's Angels as 'Infernal Extraterrestrials'), Deborah Manship plays roles within roles as Morgana, and Christopher Guard is vulnerable and burnt-out as Bellboy. Bellboy has an impressive death scene, committing suicide by commanding the robots he once created to kill him. The Chief Clown watches this nightmarish moment, his mad smile punctuating the scene.

Stephen's subtext for the story, about dead hippy ideals, gave the actors something they could latch onto and also added emotional depth to *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*. Stephen's droll hippy names were great and I was always a little sorry that we never actually got to meet Peace Pipe or Juniper Berry. The treatment of this theme also showed Stephen's own cynically sardonic impression of the flower-power generation. 'If you hear someone going on about love and peace,' says Captain Cook, 'run a mile.'

Captain Cook was played by T. P. McKenna and both character and actor were a sheer pleasure. Developing a notion about an Indiana Jones-style explorer, Stephen created Captain Cook as a kind of villainous counterpart of the Doctor – a mysterious space traveller who wanders the galaxies with a female sidekick.

There was a suggestion in Stephen's original script of an unwholesome relationship between the Captain and his female companion. In fact, the Captain draws a parallel between himself and Mags and the Doctor and Ace which the Doctor doesn't like at all. John Nathan-Turner thought this was a bit near the knuckle, since the Doctor's relationship with his young protégés had always been vulnerable to misinterpretation.

So, at his request, Stephen soft-pedalled this aspect of Captain Cook and Mags. I still think this is a shame, though they remain great characters, with some notably sardonic dialogue from Captain Cook: 'You don't often see one like that, do you?' he remarks coolly as the giant robot springs to murderous life.

In a way, Captain Cook was another of the successful monsters in the story – a monster of a bore, egotist, coward and troublemaker. He even comes back from the dead as a zombie ('Sarcophagus face' Ace calls him) and he's still a crashing bore. T. P. McKenna was wonderful, taking to the character with gusto. 'T. P. can't get into his frock quickly enough,' said Ros Ebbutt, 'He loves it.'

I knew T. P. McKenna as a screen presence from his work with Sam Peckinpah on **Straw Dogs**. I asked him what it had been like working with Peckinpah on this savage and disturbing masterpiece and he told me about a riotous drunken dinner party the director had thrown, which had climaxed with T. P. falling off a table and dislocating his arm. One of the stuntmen

hurried to help. ‘This great fool said, “It’s all right, I know what to do, let me pop it back into place.”’ The stuntman apparently made a grisly mess of things. So the black arm sling which T. P. sports in **Straw Dogs** was worn from necessity. ‘Some female critic kept going on about what a wonderful sinister touch it was,’ said T. P., ‘Ha!’

T. P. was tickled by one incident that happened during the shoot. In the scene where Mags transforms into a werewolf, the Ringmaster calls for a lighting cue to trigger her transformation, ‘That old devil moon effect.’ As Mags metamorphoses into her lycanthropic form, the lights around the circus ring sway wildly. At one point Alan wanted a shot of a light pivoting on its pole, but with no sign of a hand moving it.

Suddenly shooting stopped while a search was made for a black glove that wouldn’t be seen in the shadows. ‘Let me do it,’ said Ricco, who was African American, ‘I don’t need a glove.’ Ricco duly swivelled the light for us in the shot while T. P. watched, chuckling, quoting, ‘I don’t need a glove!’

Besides a strong cast, *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* also benefited immensely from some atmospheric and sympathetic lighting. Three talents were involved in providing lighting during the film. The OB footage was lit by the ever-reliable Ian Dow. Studio lighting was the work of Don Babbage and Henry Barber. Don Babbage would also work on *The Happiness Patrol*, where there was a dismaying tendency to push the lights up to full and forsake any atmosphere. This despite our every effort to achieve a moody story, by setting it in night-time streets and so on.

Henry Barber’s work, on the other hand, showed a sensitivity to nuance and mood that would contribute greatly to *Ghost Light*, on which Henry did sterling work later in the season. When Don Babbage left the production, I believe due to illness, and Henry Barber took over studio lighting, Alan Wareing wasn’t exactly heartbroken.

Alan did a very effective job of staging the action and he worked well with the actors, bringing out the script’s irony and emotion. He succeeded in fashioning a memorable story despite considerable adversity. *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* was a troubled production.

The trouble began when asbestos was discovered in Television Centre. This meant that the studios we were relying on to shoot the bulk of the story were suddenly unavailable. After much frustration searching for an alternative venue, John displayed his usual resourcefulness by working out a deal whereby we would film in a tent, in the car park of the BBC’s studios at Elstree. In some ways this was an advantage. One of my preoccupations on **Doctor Who**, besides trying to guarantee authentically sinister-looking alien beings, was to also try and achieve authentically sinister alien settings. Luckily, the circus

environment of *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* lent itself to this. The tents were environments that could be created realistically while also providing suitable atmosphere.

I had always been a big fan of Robert Fuest, a director and designer who'd worked on **The Avengers** TV series and was later responsible for the **Dr Phibes** movies. Fuest had a great gift for creating memorable and stylish sets using limited resources. He also directed an excellent oddball science fiction film called **The Final Programme**, from the Michael Moorcock novel, which makes terrific use of tunnels formed of billowing fabric lit with coloured lights. This serves to create a moody, futuristic environment with an unsettling sense of unreality.

I decided that *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* was an ideal story to make use of this technique. I talked to Stephen about including fabric tunnels between the tents and he was amenable. This was one of our attempts to influence the design which really turned up trumps.

The tunnels were featured in various chase and concealment scenes, as well as for mundane to-ing and fr-oing and dialogue scenes. They worked strikingly well and made a stimulating change from the usual **Doctor Who** corridor scenes.

Although *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* gained considerably in atmosphere from being shot in a real tent, there were problems with the arrangement, notably aircraft noise and the hullabaloo of vehicles manoeuvring in the parking lot. This all interfered with the sound recording and ratcheted up the stress a notch or two.

Shooting at Elstree did have some compensations. One day an alarm went off and we all filed outside to watch fire engines roaring into the car park. Our tent had emptied and so had the various Elstree Studio buildings, so that the cast of **Doctor Who** was mingling and fraternising with the casts of other shows. It was an impromptu festive occasion and since it turned out to be a false alarm, the cast of the French resistance sitcom '**Allo 'Allo** decided to entertain the firemen. A troupe of actresses in cancan dancers outfits performed an energetic improvised dance number, to much hilarity, ending in a flourish when they threw their skirts up and offered their frilly-knickered derrières to the delighted firemen.

The Greatest Show in the Galaxy represented another phase in my campaign to rehabilitate the Doctor and make him into a formidable, mysterious entity. However, the story was conceived at a time when I was only beginning to formulate my ideas on the subject and it shows signs of the changes in thinking we had along the way.

When *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* begins, the Doctor seems

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7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *The Harbinger*

by KEVIN CLARKE

It's the 25th anniversary of *Doctor Who* and we give you bows, arrows, Nazis, jazz. Cybermen and limousines. Imagine what you'll get for the 50th!

Karl.....METIN YENAL
De Flores.....ANTON DIFFRING
Lady Peinforte.FIONA WALKER
Richard.....GERARD MURPHY
De Flores.....ANTON DIFFRING
Mathematician

LESLIE FRENCH

Jazz Quartet...COURTNEY PINE,
ADRIAN REID, ERNEST MOTHLE
FRANK TONTON

The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Security Man...MARTYN READ
Cyberleader.....DAVID BANKS

Stunt Arranger PAUL HEASMAN

Theme music by RON GRANGER

Theme arrangement/incidental

music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Costume designer RICHARD CROTT

Script editor ANNE WILKINSON

Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

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MY KIND OF DAY, page 118

★ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35-8.00pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *The Harbinger*

by KEVIN CLARKE

Second episode of the three-
part 25th anniversary special.

Andrew finds the working
environment frustrating on
location and goes home. He
returns later to continue his
darkening of the Doctor.

De Flores.....ANTON DIFFRING
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Cyber Leader.....DAVID BANKS
Karl.....METIN YENAL
Cyber Lieutenant.MARK HARDY
Lady Peinforte.FIONA WALKER
Richard.....GERARD MURPHY
First skinhead...CHRIS CHERING
Second skinhead

SYMUND LAWES

First Cyberman...BRIAN ORRELL

Stunt Arranger

PAUL HEASMAN NICK GILLARD

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Make-up designer DORCA NIERADZIK

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

■ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35-8.00pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *The Harbinger*

by KEVIN CLARKE

The final part of this
special three-part silver
anniversary adventure.

The Carmel Masterplan is
underway, meanwhile the
Cybermen are now so
allergic to gold that they
faint just reading the word.

The Doctor.SYLVESTER MCCOY
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Richard.....GERARD MURPHY
Lady Peinforte.FIONA WALKER
Cyber Lieutenant

MARK HARDY

De Flores.....ANTON DIFFRING

Karl.....METIN YENAL

Cyber leader.....DAVID BANKS

Cyberman.....BRIAN ORRELL

Mrs Remington.DOLORES GRAY

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Visual effects designer

PURRY BRAHAN

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

■ CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 10

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Such a simple bit of flying.

In February 1987, a couple months after joining the show, I discovered a terrific script by a writer called Kevin Clarke. I discovered it by letting it sit in my in-tray for about five weeks.

It was a pilot for a series called **The Score**. It was the story of a guy who obtains a van which he uses to set up a small business, moving furniture and so on. Various minor adventures ensue. It plays like a fairly light-hearted comedy drama, something in the Jack Rosenthal vein. It was well written and entertaining, right up to the stunning conclusion where the viewers (but not the protagonists) learn that there's a shipment of heroin concealed inside the van. And suddenly it's a thriller.

I set the script down thinking, 'It's dynamite. I'll ring his agent first thing Monday.'

A couple of weeks later, I met Kevin Clarke. His script had impressed me and I was impressed by him in person. He told me about his sickle cell anaemia script for **Casualty** which had been too hot to handle. I spoke to him about the possibility of his writing for **Doctor Who**. He wasn't free. At the time, he was busy writing for **The Bill**.

Kevin's scripts for **The Bill** were probably some of the best British police drama since the Troy Kennedy Martin heyday of **Z Cars**. His scripts were hard hitting, keenly observed and bitingly funny, with controversial subject matter. He also created a memorable guest character, a transvestite prostitute called Roxanne. Roxanne was great and was brought back by popular demand. Kevin ended up writing several scripts about the character for the series. (Today, with **The Bill** mutating into a long-running soap, Roxanne would probably have become part of the permanent cast.) All Kevin's **The Bill** work was exceptional, full of dark comedy and big ideas (one of his scripts featured not a car chase but a *double-decker bus* chase) and attracted considerable attention. He soon moved on to writing high-profile television drama like the ITV series **Wish Me Luck** (Kevin had a different, rather more profane name for the show), which concerned female British agents assisting the French Resistance in the Second World War. Kevin wrote the last episode of the first series and it received record-breaking viewing figures.

Kevin was a tall, slender mercurial man with close-cropped hair, a jutting Roman nose and dark, soulful eyes that could go cold with anger. He had been around a bit before becoming a writer and had a store of intriguing stories about his adventures in his bohemian days, like the time he got robbed at knifepoint in Morocco, leaving him stranded in Africa with nothing but the clothes on his back and his guitar. 'It was survival time,' said Kevin

nostalgically.

Months passed before our next meeting, in October 1987, with Kevin then free to write a **Doctor Who**. Jon Hardy, a fellow script editor, came up to my office to talk about Kevin, who'd apparently had a script bounced on the police series **Rockliffe's Babies**. 'He's been shamefully treated,' said John. This made me all the more eager to commission Kevin, to treat a good writer decently.

Soon Kevin became a regular visitor to the office for story discussions and he and Ian Briggs formed a mutual admiration society in my office. Kevin said to Ian, 'I can't imagine summoning into being a fully realised fantasy world like you did. Iceworld is like this fantasy distortion of Bejam's [a freezer food chain store], the way Paradise Towers is an amplification of a tower block.' And Ian nodded happily.

Kevin Clarke and Ian Briggs were both excellent writers and both northern lads. They got along like a house on fire. Kevin even name-checked Ian in his script for *Silver Nemesis*. When Richard, the seventeenth-century villainess's henchman, sees the Cybermen for the first time he is terrified. He falls on his knees and begins to pray. 'I shall look after the sick,' he offers desperately, 'which reminds me, I'll return to Briggs his money.'

On the same day as my meeting with Kevin and Ian, I heard some alarming news about Sophie Aldred. She'd been doing a kids' TV show called **Corners**. Sophie and her co-presenter had had to go up on wires in the studio and after they did their bit they were being lowered back to the floor, and the wire wrapped itself around Sophie's neck.

She screamed for them to stop lowering her but the genius in charge (who had also reportedly rigged wires on **Doctor Who**) told them to keep lowering, to ignore the hysterical girlie. Sophie's co-presenter started screaming then and fortunately they listened to him, otherwise Sophie would have been dead. I talked to her about it on the phone, how horrible it must have been. 'And it was such a simple bit of flying,' said Sophie.

It was November, with the sun setting early and winter closing in when I next met Kevin Clarke, for a drink in a pub along Shepherd's Bush Green towards Hammersmith. We talked about a story idea and (bemoaned the fact I hadn't written anything for years. He patted me on the shoulder and said, 'Don't worry, you will.' (almost believed him.

I'd like to think I helped Kevin with his *Silver Nemesis* script and that maybe he even learned some useful craft from working with me. Certainly, I assisted in getting his head around the science fiction aspects of the show, which is something I had to do for most of the writers. But Kevin definitely helped me with my own writing.

The great American thriller writer John D. MacDonald once observed that ‘Writing is the classic example of learning by doing.’ Or, as I believe Hemingway said, ‘Writers write.’ The way Kevin put it was, ‘The imagination is a muscle.’ The implication being, the more you devote your imagination to writing the stronger, and better, your imagination and therefore your writing become. He was profoundly right and it is one of the best pieces of advice I’ve ever had.

‘I like the way you talk in musical terms, jazz terms,’ said Kevin as we sat in the pub on that November evening. ‘You talk about writing riffs. I noticed that right away.’

I was soon having good, productive meetings with Kevin, working our way towards a storyline. I was thinking we might be onto a winner here. Kevin was a terrific writer of action and suspense, with a fondness for Second World War adventure films like Alistair MacLean’s **Where Eagles Dare**, which Quentin Tarantino calls ‘a bunch of guys on a mission movie’ and which is also a guilty pleasure of mine. It’s a very effective thriller, although it lacks the intelligence, irony and depth of Troy Kennedy Martin’s **Kelly’s Heroes**, another Second World War ‘bunch of guys on a mission movie’.

This fondness for Second World War stories had come in useful for Kevin on **Wish Me Luck**, and it also pointed the way forward to one of the main elements of his **Doctor Who** script. We would have latter-day Nazis in *Silver Nemesis*, with an evil escaped German officer coming out of retirement from his palatial lair in South America.

But when John read early drafts of the scripts, featuring a lot of action and involving Nazis, he freaked. The notion of neo-Nazis, latter-day fascists, seemed just too political and potentially controversial. He wouldn’t have it.

So I simply went through the script removing every mention of the word ‘Nazi’ (it never appeared in dialogue, anyway, just scene directions) and substituted the euphemism ‘Paramilitary’. So, for instance, instead of a cadre of Nazi gunmen blasting away at the Doctor and Ace, we had a cadre of Paramilitary gunmen.

This did the trick, and John was happy. It was clear sailing from then on, at least as far as the Nazi – I mean Paramilitary – question was concerned.

I went into John’s office and found him looking down the blackboard on the wall, running his eyes down next season’s chart at the writers’ column. ‘And then we have that nice bloke...’ He meant Kevin. I introduced John and Kevin for an informal chat on Friday to break the ice and it looked like he’d be on next season. Good.

A few days later, John was considerably less cheerful. Over the previous few weeks, a hate campaign in the **Doctor Who** fan press had been breaking

through into the much wider forum of the national newspapers. **DWB (Doctor Who Bulletin)** had been circulating a petition for John's resignation. Now it had even got into the **Stage** and that had really got John depressed. Normally, I didn't have much sympathy for John. I felt he'd made major mistakes during his term as producer of **Doctor Who**. But now I couldn't help feeling sorry for him as he sat glumly in his office leafing through the personal attacks.

Kevin Clarke came in for a story discussion with John and me. It went well and as we wrapped up Kevin said, 'Shall we formalise this relationship?'. He meant, after all these weeks of talks and script discussions and developing a storyline, could we finally *pay him some money*? And I got a glimpse of what a precarious life it was for a freelance writer.

John responded immediately and asked Kate Eastal next door to start typing the commissioning brief.

Some time before, I had noticed that someone had written 'ITV' on the door of the BBC lifts. Just that, as if it were a blunt obscenity. (And in this context, it sort of was.) It amused me every time I looked at it. I was delighted to learn from Kevin that someone, in a symmetrical act, had written 'BBC' in the lift at the ITV offices on the South Bank. He winked as he described the graffiti.

Early in 1988, I had a long meeting with Kevin. His script had crossed the line between being a potential **Doctor Who** script and being a real one, but it still needed improvement. We'd now combined the Nazi story strand with a female sorceress from the seventeenth century and her henchman, as well as the Cybermen.

Like the Daleks, the Cybermen were familiar alien villains coming back for the 25th anniversary season. This was John's plan and I thought it was a great idea. John was reminiscing about the shooting of *Attack of the Cybermen*. 'It was so cold we had to tape Nicola Bryant's nipples down. They were obscene.' John was in good spirits. He was ringing **Debrett's** to find out the correct way to address Prince Edward in a letter. 'It's a load of old camp,' said John. Ever the astute manipulator of publicity, John wanted to enlist some royals to appear on-screen in the 25th anniversary show, which was to be *Silver Nemesis*.

The silver anniversary element of *Silver Nemesis* was obviously echoed by the choice of the 'silver' appearance of the Cybermen and the living silver metal validium, which Kevin had created and which was our McGuffin in the script. We'd also worked the anniversary theme into the story with the cunning idea of a comet which passes the Earth every 25 years. (Hereafter in this text the comet will also be referred to as a 'meteor', in a way that is guaranteed to

madden any true professional astronomer.) It was John's desire to do a silver anniversary celebration for the show, but I was having fun with Kevin making it work as a story.

Kevin Clarke and I were on a train, talking about Prince Edward. John was definitely going to invite the Prince to make a guest appearance – would the Prince accept? 'Of course he'll do it,' said Kevin. 'The guy can't resist.' Kevin and I had just been to see Sylvester McCoy in a matinee of **The Pied Piper** at the National Theatre. Sylvester met us at the stage door and got us in for free, seating us with a friend of his in the director's box, which was a little cubicle at the back of the theatre with an electric window which moved up and down. An ancient staff director stared in at us, then rushed in to scoop up his belongings – a stopwatch and a **Teach Yourself Greek** book, before we could steal them. 'They can't sit in the box. You can't have people sitting in the box,' he sniffed to Sylvester, and left. 'That was the theatre ghost,' said Sylvester.

Wednesday 23 March 1988. Kevin Clarke delivered his first complete draft of episode two in a folder that had written on it 'Andrew Cartmel, Doctor Who. Urgent: The fate of the earth is in your hands'.

By this time, John Nathan-Turner had perfected a strategy for maximising the budget on the 13-episode **Doctor Who** season. In theory we had enough money for three stories each season, two four-parters and a six-parter, each story being shot half in the studio and half on location. But John had cunningly worked out that the six-parter could be split into two three-parters, providing one was shot entirely in the studio and one was shot entirely on location. Kevin's script for *Silver Nemesis* would be the all-location story for Season 25.

Both three-parters were to be handled by the same team (in terms of budgeting, they were regarded as one show), with the same director. John had chosen Chris Clough, who had done the same slot the year before, with *Delta and the Bannermen* and *Dragonfire*.

My first introduction to Chris had been Kate Easteal's description of him. 'You'll like him. Chris just laughs,' she said. 'When the pressure's on and something goes wrong or something, Chris stays cool and just laughs it off.' When we met, Chris did indeed prove immensely affable. But the pressure during the Season 25 three-parters was truly immense and eventually Chris stopped laughing. I attended the location shoot for *Silver Nemesis* and John was there too. The tension was high and it wasn't much fun. Eventually things got so bad, with so much acrimony and bad temper and general ill will in the air, that I just decided to jump on the train and go home.

I got back to London and felt an enormous relief at having escaped such a poisonous atmosphere. I returned to my basement flat in Baron's Court and the arms of my girlfriend. I was lazing around happily reading, with Kate in the kitchen mixing us cocktails made from maple syrup, lemon juice and rum. She was working from **The Esquire Cocktail Book**, which had a list of 365 special occasions in the back, an excuse for a party for every day of the year. This was National Defence Bonds Day.

Once she'd made the cocktails she set about roasting some chestnuts under the grill. A sudden powerful burnt smell emanated from the kitchen. Kate had left the chestnuts under the grill too long. 'They seem to have exploded a bit,' she said. One exploded into shrapnel as she touched it. 'They're really violent... I don't understand it. I gave them a jolly good prodding before I put them under.'

Then the telephone rang. It was John Nathan-Turner at his most friendly and charming. This was a man transformed. It was largely John's outbursts of rage that had led me to say farewell to the location shoot and return to the pleasures of London. At one point, Kevin made some remark to John that was relevant to the story and John snapped a response along the lines of 'Mind your own business.' Kevin took this incredibly well, smoothly saying 'With great pleasure' and bowing out of the confrontation with poise. John just exploded like that at times. Everybody understood it was the huge pressure he was under. Nevertheless it was always a shock, like suddenly getting a savage bite from a friendly animal. Or from a man who was more commonly amusing, affable and easygoing.

John was at his most amusing and affable on the phone, asking why I had departed the unit. I explained about the poisonous atmosphere and how **Doctor Who** had ceased to be fun. Naturally it didn't *have* to be fun, it could just be a job. So I was perfectly happy to get on with my work back at the office in London, instead of wasting time down in Arundel on location. I tried to stand my ground as John invited me back to the shoot. But, as I said, he was at his most amusing and affable and he soon charmed me into it.

The next day, I returned to location and everyone seemed pleased to see me. Kevin said that my departure had cued a change in the emotional weather of the unit. The poisonous atmosphere had gone. 'You did a good thing by leaving,' said Kevin. 'Welcome back.'

The *Silver Nemesis* shoot was fun again, though often tense fun. Kevin had been delighted to learn that his Nazi officer was going to be played by Anton Diffring. Kevin said it was great having him in a show he'd written. Indeed, it was the first time he'd ever done anything that had impressed his father.

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tastefully and moodily lit by the reliable Ian Dow.

Kevin's characterisation is excellent here, with Lady Peinforte, Richard and the ill-fated mathematician, played by Leslie French, who is found busily doing their calculations for them. Leslie French interpolated some delightful business here, murmuring over his sums. He also has the mathematician sound amusingly sad when he announces that the meteor's orbit is decaying. Decay is clearly a sad thing, even for the orbit of a meteor.

I encouraged Kevin to make the mathematician an unknown genius, on a par with Leonardo da Vinci. We've never heard of him because, unlike Leonardo, his life is cut short just as he's having his great revelation. 'I shall build a flying machine. Why, I can change the world,' says the mathematician. But Lady Peinforte and Richard have just realised that they need human blood for their time travel potion. So the mathematician's world-altering genius is snuffed out before it can achieve anything, in an irony which gives the character's demise some dramatic weight despite his brief tenure in the story.

From the murder and sorcery of 1638, we jump 350 years forward to the present day, using rather a nifty cut into the shadowed bell of a saxophone. More precisely, Courtney Pine's tenor saxophone. Courtney Pine is a living jazz hero. Inspired by John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, he is one of the few British players of genuine international stature, having played with George Russell and Art Blakey. His haunting playing adds immeasurably to the Trevor Jones film score for the supernatural thriller **Angel Heart**.

Kevin and I were both jazz fans. Kevin and Kevin's girlfriend and Kate and I sat through the entire bum-numbing length of Clint Eastwood's Charlie Parker biopic **Bird** at the Lumiere cinema in St Martin's Lane and got tickets to see Nina Simone sing at the Royal Festival Hall.

When the question arose of who to cast for the jazz musician in Kevin's script, Kevin had immediately suggested Courtney Pine. What the hell, we thought, we might as well start at the top. And work our way down. John shrugged amiably. Jazz wasn't his field, but he'd try to make the writer and the script editor happy by trying to get this Courtney Pine guy.

To our amazement, the lights all went green. Everyone said yes. And Courtney did it. So, on a sunny day, in front of Black Jack's Mill Restaurant in the idyllic green of the Harefield countryside, we found ourselves listening to Courtney and his band playing for us, for the cameras, and for the audience at the outdoor tables – more black people than ever seen on-screen in a **Doctor Who** episode.

After the shooting, Courtney Pine and his band went into the studio to record the music for the show. It was a Sunday afternoon in Shepherd's Bush and Kevin and I were in attendance. It was a blissful little interlude, one of the

blessings brought my way by **Doctor Who**. Courtney played beautiful, fluent tenor sax and we listened. I might have been smoking something besides tobacco.

Kevin's fondness for jazz even transmitted itself to the Doctor. Suddenly he was an aficionado. Listening to Courtney Pine play outside Black Jack's, the Doctor has the line, 'My favourite kind of jazz – straight blowing.' This scene also features some other mischievously good writing by Kevin.

'Have you seen this?' says Ace, lifting up a newspaper with the glaring headline 'Meteor Approaches England'. 'Charlton have picked up three points,' she continues, blithely reading the sports page and ignoring the headline.

As they leave, Ace buys a tape of Courtney's music, which she'll later play in the tape deck that the Doctor has built for her. Actually, the tape deck was the handiwork of Mike Tucker, who gave it a lovely retro look, with its art deco Bakelite sunrise façade. This 'ghetto blaster' is later used in the story to jam the communications of the Cyber space fleet. Courtney's jazz echoes out across a beautiful deep-space vista, and blares from the Cybermen's receiver on Earth, where they all stand around dumbfounded, looking like the most un-hip sentient beings ever.

After a skirmish with the Cybermen's brainwashed human assassins, Sylvester and Sophie go on to pay a visit to Windsor (actually Arundel) Castle. The Doctor breezily breaks in, wanting to enlist the aid of the Queen. 'It's probably treason,' says Ace, 'I'm too young to go the tower.' Cue a close encounter with the Queen ('I know that woman from somewhere,' says the Doctor, not immediately recognising her) and her corgis. Sadly the woman was just an actress, or professional celebrity-impersonator, rather than our actual monarch. Unfortunately, there were no real royals available. Prince Edward declined our offer of a part, though John read between the lines of the royal response and remained convinced that Edward would have loved to do it if his mother hadn't put the kibosh on things.

As the Doctor and Ace blunder around the castle looking for royal assistance, the Doctor utters the line, 'There is no alternative.' During rehearsals one of the other actors greeted the line with a vague sense of recognition. 'That's a quote from someone. Who said that? Hitler?' 'Close,' replied Sylvester with a fiendish grin. It was, of course, a catchphrase of Prime Minister Thatcher.

Among the extras playing tourists at Windsor is a trio of **Doctor Who** writers making a cameo appearance. Graeme Curry, Stephen Wyatt, and Kevin. You can see them at the back of the line outside the castle. Graeme is tall and broad, Kevin is tall and slender, and Stephen is the small guy in a cap standing between them (Stephen had gone on record complaining that we had

too many tall writers on **Doctor Who**). I was invited to join them on camera in the scene, but by this time I was firmly convinced that public exposure, at least in the strange intense and incestuous world of **Doctor Who** fandom, was a bad idea. I declined all interviews and avoided being photographed. I quite enjoyed pursuing this J. D. Salinger/Thomas Pynchon/B. Traven-style approach to literary fame.

Kevin also features in another brief Hitchcock-style walk-on in *Silver Nemesis*. He can be glimpsed as the pedestrian in the street who glances back in puzzlement at Lady Peinforte and Richard in their seventeenth-century garb, as they make their way towards an encounter with a hapless pair of skinheads. Kevin was highly amused by one of the shops in the street, a photographer's establishment called Apertures of Arundel. 'Joe Orton would have loved it,' he said.

Silver Nemesis is notable for doing a generally successful job of ushering in the new, more mysterious, powerful and shadowy Doctor that I was aiming towards. It presents the Doctor as a calculating chess player, manipulating events in an intricate strategy that cuts across centuries. I was tired of the notion of the Doctor as a mere Time Lord amongst other Time Lords. He had started off in 1963 in the shape of William Hartnell as a scary enigma, a being of unlimited mystery. He could have remained a total enigma. This strategy certainly worked for **Sapphire and Steel**, P J Hammond's classic dark fantasy drama. But if **Sapphire and Steel** had run for as many years as **Doctor Who** did, explanations might well have begun to creep in. These kinds of explanations had ruined the Doctor. The trajectory of his mysterious character had been one of steady decline. First we had no idea who or what he was. Then we learned he was a Time Lord. Then we learned he was a Time Lord among other Time Lords. And, the next thing you know, he was the kind of chump who could be put on trial by the other Time Lords, and generally be pushed around with impunity.

So I set about restoring the awe, mystery and strength to the character. With the help of Marc Platt and Ben Aaronovitch, the two writers I was working with who were interested in the **Doctor Who** mythos and had a knowledge of it, I set about making the Doctor once again more than a mere chump of a Time Lord.

Kevin Clarke, like Stephen and Graeme and Malcolm, knew little of the mythology that had encrusted itself around **Doctor Who** over the years. So he was probably baffled, though entirely good natured, about the inclusion of certain dialogue. For example, Ace senses that there is plenty that the Doctor isn't telling her. And she's beginning to get a scent of his secret. They are talking about the living metal validium, a kind of ultimate weapon

developed on the Doctor's home planet of Gallifrey. Ace is quizzing him about the stuff. 'It was created by Omega,' says the Doctor. 'And...' says Ace meaningfully. 'And Rassilon,' says the Doctor. 'And...' says Ace again, with persistent insinuation.

All this was deeply meaningful to hardcore fans. The point was that Omega and Rassilon were the founding fathers of Gallifrey. They towered above the Time Lords who followed. They were demigods. And Ace's nifty dialogue 'And...' coupled with the Doctor's neatly evasive response, are a subtle attempt to say that there was a third presence there in the shadowy days of Gallifrey's creation.

In other words, the Doctor was also there. So he's more than a Time Lord. He's one of these half-glimpsed demigods. Marc Platt was going to work this idea into his story 'Lungbarrow', which was eventually set aside in favour of *Ghost Light*.

But the Doctor's secret did become part of the plot of *Silver Nemesis*. Lady Peinforte threatens to expose him. But the Cybermen simply aren't interested in any of it. 'The secrets of the Time Lords mean nothing to us,' says the Cyber Leader, speaking for just about everyone, it has to be said.

All of this went over the heads of most of the production team and most of the writers, and certainly most of the viewers. But it was a good first move towards making the Doctor darker and more enigmatic and powerful, which was exactly what the character needed.

When we had finished shooting and I saw *Silver Nemesis* in the editing rooms, I thought that it generally worked. Admittedly, some scenes just don't come off. Why does Lady Peinforte suddenly smash her way through a window with a chair? In the script, our intention had been that the sixteenth-century sorceress was thwarted by a mundane twentieth-century lock, so she resorted to direct action. In the version on-screen she just seems to erupt into violence for the hell of it.

There are other occasional infelicities. We have Richard nonplussed to encounter his own tombstone. 'If the dogs would not eat thee I ordered you put out here to attend me in the next world,' says Lady Peinforte happily. It's a good scene but it would have been a great scene if it had been shot in a sufficiently moody fashion, at night, say.

But given our budget and resources the notion of night shooting, even for such an amusingly chilly little gem of a scene, was just a pipe dream.

Silver Nemesis also features plenty of other classic dialogue from Kevin. One day, before we started filming, Ben Aaronovitch was to be found in the **Doctor Who** office snorting and shrieking with laughter at such an embarrassing volume that I was sure that the production team was going to

start staring. Ben was laughing because I'd just shown him my favourite page from Kevin's episode two:

The Doctor

I don't suppose you've completely disobeyed my instructions and secretly prepared any Nitro-9 explosive, have you?

Ace

What if I had?

The Doctor

You naturally wouldn't do anything so insanely dangerous as carry it around with you, would you?

Ace

Of course not. I'm a good girl and I do what I'm told.

The Doctor

Excellent. Blow up that vehicle.

• The years that have elapsed since *Silver Nemesis*, Kevin Clarke and I seem to have fallen out. Our friendship came to grief in some stupid conflict, now forgotten — possibly over a pretty girl who lived in a witch's spire overlooking Clapham Common. In any case, it's an abiding regret of mine that I've lost touch with Kevin.

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *The Crooked Smile*
First of a three-part
adventure by GRAEME CURRY
Bertie Bassett helps
overthrow the Thatcher
government while the Doctor
and Ace play in a go-cart.

Killjoy.....MARY HEALY
Silas P.....JONATHAN BURN
Daisy K.....GEORGINA HALE
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Helen A.....SHEILA HANCOCK
Trevor Sigma

JOHN NORMINGTON
Joseph C.....RONALD FRASER
Harold V.....TIM BARKER
Priscilla P.....RACHEL BELL
Gilbert M.....HAROLD INNOCENT
Kandyman.....DAVID JOHN POPE
Earl Sigma.....RICHARD D SHARP
Susan Q.....LESLIE DUNLOP

Theme music composed by
RON GRANTER

Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN

Costume designer RICHARD CROFT

Script editor ANDREW CARTMIL

Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

★ CELEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35-8.00pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
The Crooked Smile
Second of a three-part
adventure by GRAEME CURRY
Fruit machines make their
first appearance in the
Cartmel era. Like honey,
they're not seen anywhere
else in *Doctor Who's* prior
history.

The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Earl Sigma.....RICHARD D SHARP
Kandyman.....DAVID JOHN POPE
Gilbert M.....HAROLD INNOCENT
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Daisy K.....GEORGINA HALE

Priscilla P.....RACHEL BELL
Susan Q.....LESLIE DUNLOP
Wences.....PHILIP NEVE
Wulfic.....RYAN FREEDMAN
Helen A.....SHEILA HANCOCK
Trevor.....JOHN NORMINGTON

David S.....STEVE SWINCOE
Alex S.....MARK CARROLL
Joseph C.....RONALD FRASER
Doorman.....TIM SCOTT

Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN

Make-up designer DORNA NIEHADAK

Script editor ANDREW CARTMIL

Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

★ CELEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35-8.00pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy
in *The Crooked Smile*
Last of a three-part
adventure by GRAEME CURRY
The Doctor defeats Margaret
Thatcher and teaches Terra
Alpha the blues. Next...
teaching jazz to Mondasians.

The Doctor.....SYLVESTER MCCOY
Forem doorman.....TIM SCOTT
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Susan Q.....LESLIE DUNLOP
Daisy K.....GEORGINA HALE
Helen A.....SHEILA HANCOCK
Trevor Sigma

JOHN NORMINGTON

Newscaster.....ANNIE HULLEY

Priscilla P.....RACHEL BELL

Gilbert M.....HAROLD INNOCENT

Earl Sigma.....RICHARD D SHARP

Joseph C.....RONALD FRASER

Wulfic.....RYAN FREEDMAN

Wences.....PHILIP NEVE

Kandyman.....DAVID JOHN POPE

Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN

Visual effects designer

PERRY BRAHAM

Script editor ANDREW CARTMIL

Designer JOHN ASBRIDGE

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director CHRIS CLOUGH

★ CELEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 11

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I'll get out my Doctor Who pen.

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Sylvester, Sophie, Anne Reid, Tomek Bork (standing), Dinsdale Landen (seated) and Alfred Lynch in costume on set for *The Curse of Fenric*

Photograph courtesy of Mark Wymman



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Photograph courtesy of Mark Wymman



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Marc Platt, Claire Kinmont who succeeded Kate Easteal as our production secretary, riding the rocking horse on the set of *^ ð Ū ¢ î ß* with production assistant Gary Downie and myself



Me with some *v y = μ î ð Ū ¢ î ß î*



Sophie looking spiffy cross-dressing for *Ghost Light*.
Me in a jacket and tie for a change



Photograph courtesy of Ian Mackenzie

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Photograph courtesy of Ian Mackenzie

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Photograph courtesy of Ian Mackenzie

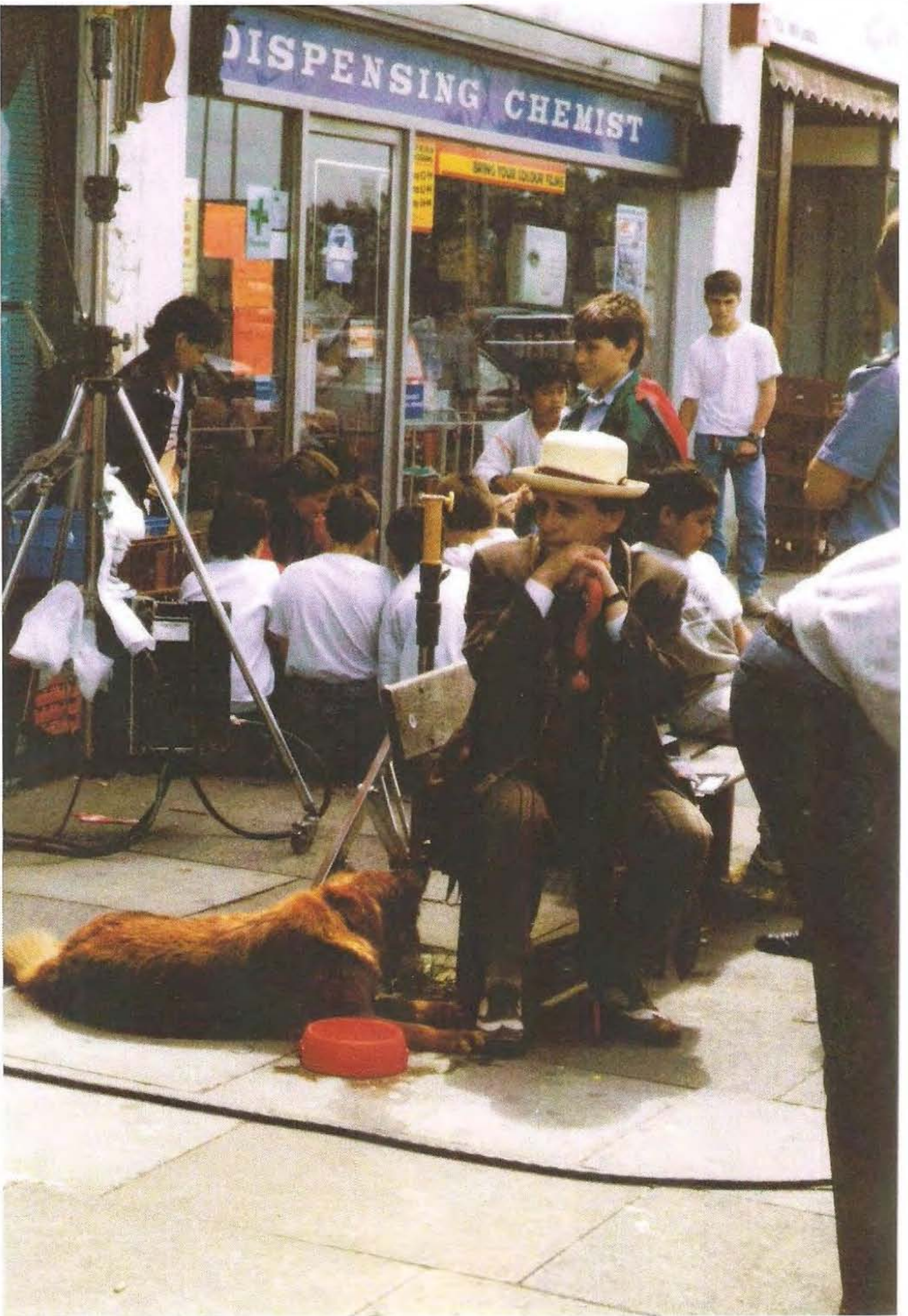


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Photograph courtesy of Ian Mackenzie



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It was a race against time, but we managed it, with seconds to spare. Things became particularly interesting when we suddenly learned that we'd lost a major set from the story. I ended up sitting around on location at the school on Macbeth Street while we shot the Dalek story madly rewriting – often on the back of Dalek scripts – to compensate for this setback.

We'd lost the prison set where the Doctor and Ace are incarcerated and meet other victims of the totalitarian regime. Necessity and adrenaline brought out a high level of inventiveness. Graeme, Ben Aaronovitch and I all threw ourselves into an emergency salvage job, collaborating on the rewrite. That's how we ended up with the Waiting Zone instead of a prison.

The Waiting Zone is just an area with a line painted on the floor. You have to wait inside the Zone, and if you step over the line a Happiness Patrol guard shoots you dead. This led to some useful dialogue about how 'There are no prisons on Terra Alpha' – a characteristic piece of totalitarian mendacity since the Waiting Zone is just a prison by another name. Although much cheaper to build.

The Waiting Zone would be equipped with a one-armed bandit machine for the prisoners to play, a holdover from the original concept of the prison as a kind of sinister amusement arcade.

We got the script revisions finished just before *The Happiness Patrol* went in front of the cameras on Wednesday 10 August 1988.

Doctor Who stories are at their most vulnerable when they involve monsters or strange creatures and, despite my caveats, we had plenty of them in *The Happiness Patrol*. First and foremost was the Kandy Man, a synthetic creature who is the chief torturer and executioner for Helen A.

We had conceived the Kandy Man as an imposing humanoid figure made out of candy, possibly fat and curved and pink. It was always an open question who would do creature design on **Doctor Who**. It could be argued with equal justice that it was the job of the special effects crew, the costume team, or the make-up people. I generally kept my fingers crossed that it would go to special effects. In the case of the Kandy Man, the job was handed to make-up designer Dorka Nieradzik. It turned out to be a very good decision in my opinion.

Graeme's reaction was rather different. 'I always thought the Kandy Man was a bit of a disaster,' he says now. 'I thought the story always needed to be harder edged and I think the Kandy Man could have been more vicious and terrifying. Once you've invoked the spirit of liquorice allsorts you can't be frightening. We were at one point thinking labs and white coats and Nazi doctors. More subtly sinister, rather than in primary colours, which is what we ended up with. The Kandy Man should have been in a sinisterly stained

white coat and glasses. We had him wearing glasses and eating the stems of the glasses, which like him were made of candy. He was someone who experimented on people in a completely dispassionate way.

What we got was utterly different from our original concept but, unlike Graeme, I thought it worked well: a robotic figure made out of sweets who was blatantly modelled on Bertie Bassett, a trademark character belonging to a sweet manufacturer. I thought this version of the Kandy Man was marvellous, but I was worried that he would get us enmeshed in litigation – which he damned nearly did. But, legal worries aside, the Kandy Man was highly effective, with his swirling spiral discs for eyes and his menacing, croaking artificial voice. (Robert Allsopp assisted Dorka in the creation of the Kandy Man and those spinning eyes were provided by the special effects company Artem.)

Another successful monster was Fifi, the vicious predatory wolf-like creature, called a Stigorax, who is Helen A's pet and only true love. Fifi had arisen from Graeme's decision to create something to chase the Pipe People – a Pipe Ferret. She was a puppet, the handiwork of Sue Moore and Stephen Mansfield. Sue and Stephen were skilful, experienced sculptors who'd also worked on the wonderful political caricature puppets brought to life every week in *Spitting Image*, the topical comedy sketch show. Sue and Stephen would later do exemplary work in Season 5 on *Battlefield*.

Fifi was terrific, proving quite convincing when fawning in Helen A's lap – helped no end, it has to be said, by Sheila Hancock's performance. She played the role absolutely straight, but with a lethal edge of satire. However, once Fifi goes down into the system of pipes beneath the city, to hunt the Doctor and Ace and the Pipe People, the illusion of a living creature is soon lost. There's only one sequence in which Fifi really looks like she's scuttling along those pipes.

The pipes are also the scene, early on, of the Doctor and Ace discovering a mysterious footprint. John Nathan-Turner rolled his eyes when he saw this scene. 'Don't you love design people?' he said. 'Just one footprint!'

The Pipe People themselves, friendly indigenous aliens, were also less than successful. Steve and Sue designed their masks, which worked well enough, but there was something ultimately unconvincing about their eyes. And, crucially, the voices of the Pipe People were all wrong (in contrast to the wonderful Kandy Man).

The Happiness Patrol was always intended, on some level, to be a satire of Thatcher's Britain. Helen A was obviously modelled on Prime Minister Thatcher and Joseph 3 on her husband Dennis. I realised that if we were too explicit about this it could get the show into trouble, so I asked Graeme to

soft-pedal any mention of the parallels in interviews. He did this faithfully, but there wasn't a lot of point. Sheila Hancock saw what we were getting at as soon as she read the part of Helen A, and she latched on to a note-perfect Mrs Thatcher piss-take. And she never hesitated to boldly say as much in public.

Despite the occasional failures of lighting (John Asbridge's brilliant sets occasionally look like sets instead of real environments); special effects (the death of Fifi in a welter of lightweight rubble wouldn't fool anyone), and the clumsy staging of odd scenes (Earl Sigma knocking the Happiness Patrol undercover guy unconscious is just a joke and the Kandy Man's death in the pipes was such a failure it didn't make it into the final cut), the Happiness Patrol generally works.

It is a genuinely sinister story, with memorable villains in the shape of both Helen A and the Kandy Man. It also gains immeasurable strength from being *about* something. The world it depicts makes references to Argentina under the Junta ('He will disappear') and South Africa during Apartheid (references to massacres in the townships) without ever being too specific or heavy handed. And throughout, Graeme Curry's dialogue is brilliant: 'Depressives – manic, reactive, endogenous, we've got them,' says the guard in the Waiting Zone. 'A man after my own soft centre,' says the Kandy Man and the Doctor warns him, 'That red-hot poker will cut through you like a knife through butterscotch.' As the Doctor flees the Kandy Kitchen with Ace she asks, 'What about the Kandy Man?' 'He'll keep,' says the Doctor, 'He's full of colouring, flavouring and preservative.'

And of course, Helen A's line at the end, *but I always thought love was overrated.* And then she sees Fifi's corpse and breaks down into the kind of overwhelming grief that was punishable by death under her own regime.

Graeme was happy with the way his story turned out, and I was glad he was happy.

NEW SERIES

7.35pm

Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Storm over Avallion

Part 1 of a four-part

adventure by

Ben Aaronovitch.

Ben's back, the Brigadier is

back, Bessie's back.

Meanwhile Benton suffers
alliterative disappointment.

Doris.....ANGELA DOUGLAS

Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart

NICHOLAS COURTNEY

Sgt Zbrigniev.....ROBERT JEZEK

Brig Bambera....ANGELA BRUCE

Morgaine.....JEAN MARSH

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED

Peter Warrisley.....JAMES ELLIS

Ancelyn.....MARCUS GILBERT

Mordred..CHRISTOPHER BOWEN

Shou Yuing.....LING TAI

Elizabeth Rowlinson

JUNE BLAND

Pat Rowlinson...NOEL COLLINS

Theme music composed by

RON GRAINER

Theme arrangements/incidental

music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Stunt arranger ALE JOINT

Costume designer

ANUSHA NERADZIK

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director MICHAEL KERRIGAN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

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7.35pm

Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Storm over Avallion

Part 3 of a four-part

adventure by

Ben Aaronovitch.

Sophie has a near-miss

during a stunt with a water

tank, and both Ben and

Andrew are having second

thoughts about killing the

Brigadier.

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED

Peter Warrisley.....JAMES ELLIS

Ancelyn.....MARCUS GILBERT

Brig Bambera....ANGELA BRUCE

Brig Lethbridge-Stewart

NICHOLAS COURTNEY

Shou Yuing.....LING TAI

Elizabeth.....JUNE BLAND

Mordred..CHRISTOPHER BOWEN

Morgaine.....JEAN MARSH

Knight commander

STEFAN SCHWARTZ

Pat Rowlinson...NOEL COLLINS

Flight Lt Lavel.....DOROTA ROE

Major Husak PAUL TOMANY

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Stunt arranger ALE JOINT

Visual effects designer

DAVE REZKOROWAINY

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director MICHAEL KERRIGAN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm

Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Storm over Avallion

Part 2 of a four-part

adventure by

Ben Aaronovitch.

Andrew is frustrated with

seeing good ideas realised

badly on screen.

Ancelyn.....MARCUS GILBERT

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED

Shou Yuing.....LING TAI

Brigadier Bambera

ANGELA BRUCE

Mordred..CHRISTOPHER BOWEN

Flight Lt Lavel.....DOROTA ROE

Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart

NICHOLAS COURTNEY

Elizabeth Rowlinson

JUNE BLAND

Pat Rowlinson...NOEL COLLINS

Peter Warrisley.....JAMES ELLIS

Morgaine.....JEAN MARSH

Knight commander

STEFAN SCHWARTZ

Incidental music by

KEFF MCCULLOCH

Make-up designer JULIETTE MAYER

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director MICHAEL KERRIGAN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm

Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Storm over Avallion

Part 4 of a four-part

adventure by

Ben Aaronovitch.

The Destroyer makes an

impressive entrance, but

Andrew is again

disappointed with how

things are being translated

on screen.

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED

Shou Yuing.....LING TAI

Morgaine.....JEAN MARSH

The Destroyer...MAREK ANTON

Mordred..CHRISTOPHER BOWEN

Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart

NICHOLAS COURTNEY

Knight commander

STEFAN SCHWARTZ

Ancelyn.....MARCUS GILBERT

Brig Bambera....ANGELA BRUCE

Doris.....ANGELA DOUGLAS

Incidental music KEFF MCCULLOCH

Stunt arranger ALE JOINT

Studio lighting DAVID LOCK

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer MARTIN COLLINS

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director MICHAEL KERRIGAN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 12

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The situation is normal, and it doesn't get much worse than that.

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And then of course, since it was a **Doctor Who** story, we had to think about how the Doctor would fit in. 'If you're going to do an Arthurian story,' says Ben, 'then the Doctor just has to be Merlin. And it couldn't be a story about the Doctor's past, because we were already doing that with *Remembrance of the Daleks*. So it had to be the Doctor's future – his *future* comes back to bite him in the arse. After all, it is a time travel show. This fitted nicely with the fact that it was set in the near future, just the way the Dalek story was set in the near past. I saw them as a pair, a philosophical pair, if that's not too pretentious a way of putting it.'

Although our discussions about this neo-Arthurian adventure predated the commissioning of Ben's Dalek script, *Battlefield* wouldn't see the light of day until the 26th season of **Doctor Who**, two years later. In some ways, 'Battle Fatigue' might have been a more appropriate title for the story, because by the time we mounted the production we were all beginning to succumb to something akin to that.

Personally, I wasn't exhausted by script editing the show, although that was certainly exhausting enough. I was simply getting worn down by the constant struggle to try and make an intelligent science fiction drama in an environment which simply didn't understand science fiction. They *just didn't get it*. We were up against a culture of incomprehension. No matter how hard we tried or how good the scripts were, what ended up on the screen was all too often a travesty of our intentions.

Battlefield was the classic example of that. Despite it being a brilliant script, a fact which I keep reminding him of, to this day the writer can't bear to watch the show. While I was working on this book, I borrowed Ben's VHS tape of the story. When I put it into my machine, the tape was wound a few minutes into the first episode. 'Did you see where that tape was wound to?' says Ben. 'That was as far as I got. That was as much as I could bear to watch. As soon as I saw the knights...' He falls silent. 'The performers were good, though,' he adds.

Battlefield was directed by Michael Kerrigan who, like Andrew Morgan, had worked on the series **The Knights of God**. Michael was a nice guy and a very intelligent director who elicited good performances from the actors and worked hard on the logistics of the action scenes. But like the rest of us he was up against problems that seemed insurmountable. Specifically, the design.

The design of *Battlefield* pretty much guaranteed the story wouldn't work. That was what Ben means about the knights. 'They were supposed to be futuristic knights in powered armour which had a vague resemblance to medieval armour,' says Ben. Hence Ace's line when they find Ancelyn lying in the brewery: 'Is it an android?' This piece of dialogue ended up seeming a bit

baffling, since it's clearly a conventional knight in armour lying there.

'It should have been powered armour,' says Ben, 'like the armour in Heinlein's **Starship Troopers** – the book, not the movie. But they just didn't get it. The designers just didn't get it. That was inexperience on my part. I didn't realise they just couldn't think outside the box.' Instead of this futuristic powered armour we got standard medieval chain mail. 'And it wasn't even stock armour,' says Ben. 'I wouldn't have minded if it was stock armour. But they made it especially. They *especially made* the wrong kind of armour. Instead of using the word *android*, I should have said *robot*, in the hope that the designer might read it.'

Indeed, by the time we were starting work on *Battlefield*, the writers and I had evolved the trick of specifically putting important design details into dialogue, on the assumption that if we put them in the scene directions (where they traditionally belonged) they would simply be ignored. In contrast, it's hard to ignore a piece of dialogue which is spoken aloud repeatedly in every read-through and rehearsal.

But this approach backfired, or at least failed spectacularly, in *Battlefield*. The spaceship at the bottom of the lake was supposed to be an organic style of technology, akin to H. R. Giger's 'bio-mechanoid' designs for *Alien*, and Ben's script makes this point repeatedly, but the design team failed to take the hint. Thus we have Ace saying to the Doctor, 'It's like being in some huge animal,' when in fact all we get is the two of them trotting up a spiral staircase with some Christmas tree lights on it.

This sort of design debacle didn't just affect the mood and stature of the piece, it frequently interfered with the clarity of the story. For instance, the miniature model of the underwater spaceship is a sadly inadequate piece of hardware. But one could live with it if it managed to get the plot points across in an any kind of effective way. It doesn't, though. Consequently we have the scene where our heroes are exploring the spaceship and Ace, who is clutching Excalibur, finds herself trapped in a chamber which fills with water while the Doctor watches helplessly.

What should happen then is that we see Ace being ejected from the ship, shooting up through the lake water towards the surface. But the model shot doesn't offer us any clue to this. All we see is a frail stream of bubbles gush up from the patently artificial, miniature model. We have no idea what they signify and there is no sign of a tiny Ace being shot from the ship. So the viewer is perplexed when Ace, who was desperately trapped a few moments earlier, suddenly appears without explanation on the surface of the water, clutching Excalibur, in a funky late 1980s version of the Lady of the Lake.

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do. In fact they're terrific. Marcus Gilbert does a marvellous job as Ancelyn and through his performance brings a reality to the story which the effects and design signally failed to convey. When Ancelyn says, 'She's coming,' signalling the arrival of Morgaine, he succeeds in lending an eerie anticipation to the arrival of the chief villain which a great deal of flashing lights and sinister laughter have failed to give it. And the moment where Ancelyn first sees the Doctor and says 'Merlin – against all hope' sends shivers down the spine.

This first encounter between the two is altogether an excellent little scene – and funny – with the Doctor echoing Ancelyn and saying 'Yes, remember my mighty arts' when clearly he doesn't know what the hell the guy is talking about.

Another excellent, though minor, character is the Brigadier's helicopter pilot Lavel, played by Dorota Rae. The scene where she stumbles into the pub and confronts Mordred is one of the best things in the story. Mordred, who has been swilling the local real ale and terrorising the blind barmaid, is somewhat drunk and immediately becomes lustful, fancying this strong, kick-ass woman. Then his mother, the evil Morgaine turns up and confronts the gun-toting Lavel. Lavel fires at her and Morgaine catches the bullet in her hand, crushing it to dust. This outstanding and entirely successful sequence works without the involvement of any special effect more sophisticated than a handful of powder.

Then Morgaine uses her sorcery to suck the thoughts from Lavel's mind and leaves her dead on the floor. Just to top it all, Morgaine pauses as she goes and pays for the beer her son has consumed – by restoring the barmaid's sight. Then we have a rather fake-looking video effects sequence of Lavel's body disappearing.

Video effects, like physical effects, were always unpredictable on **Doctor Who**. There were some brilliant video sequences – *Remembrance of the Daleks*, like the fleeting shot of the Dalek's interior. But the green serpent that attacks the Doctor in the sunken spaceship in *Battlefield* is just risible, with Sylvester tumbling and dodging a feeble visual artefact that was added weeks later in post-production. And then there was the lamentable sparkly effect that was supposed to be the 'interstitial vortex', a portal between dimensions, but which looks more like a twinkly bead curtain in a Shanghai knocking shop.

The physical effects weren't much better. There's a gag in the first episode where the Doctor has to pay for drinks in the pub and he empties out a purse full of strange coinage, one of which the script described as crawling away like a living thing. But the clockwork spider-type device we ended up with was disappointing – at least the way it's shot is disappointing – and the gag falls flat. 'It was supposed to be a jelly thing,' recalls Ben, 'a little blob.' In fact,

John Nathan-Turner cut the line about it which said, 'It's a mutated Jelly Baby.'

But while the effects were busy letting *Battlefield* down, the actors were doing a stalwart job of bringing to life the script's excellent and diverse characters. Nick Courtney is effortlessly engaging as the Brigadier, striking up a rapport with his pilot Lavel ('The situation, Lavel, is normal, and it doesn't get much worse than that. You know, I'm rather enjoying this'); sending figurative sparks flying in his confrontation with Morgaine; alienating both Bambera ('Yes sir. Perhaps I should make some tea, too') and Ace, who refers to him as 'Colonel Blimp'. Best of all, though, is his interaction with the Doctor: 'This whole area is crawling with armed extraterrestrials and they're hostile.' 'Same as ever, eh Brigadier?'

The crucial question concerning the Brigadier was whether he should survive the story or if we should use this opportunity to kill him off in a suitably dramatic and noble fashion, giving the character a fitting end. Again, we chose to have our cake and eat it by deceiving the audience into thinking the Brigadier is dead, then revealing that he's survived his encounter with the Destroyer, the story's big monster. I'm glad we did this. I've far too much affection for the character, and for Nick, to be the one responsible for putting an end to the Brigadier.

Again, though, the success of the UNIT concept in the script was hindered by design decisions on-screen. 'They gave UNIT the wrong guns,' observes Ben. 'Uzis! A serious military force would never use Uzis. Not for fighting in the open. Uzis are for use in an urban environment, at close quarters. They're good for drug dealers, z'suppose. What they really needed were assault rifles, ironically just like the ones that were used in **The Knights of God**.'

Besides Nigel Kneale, the other writer whose work influenced us on *Battlefield* was Richard Matheson, specifically his brilliant script for **The Devil Rides Out**, another Hammer film, which adapted a classic novel of black magic by Dennis Wheatley. **The Devil Rides Out** climaxes with a scene in which satanic forces assault the heroes who are sheltering in a pentagram drawn on the floor. z'suggested Ben should think about **The Devil Rides Out** and come up with a similarly creepy sequence for *Battlefield* and he devised a memorable scene for Ace and Shou Yuing (played by Ling Tai).

In **The Devil Rides Out**, the attack takes the form of a torrent of special effects (including a rather dodgy giant spider). Luckily, our homage involved a purely mental attack (which is somewhat reminiscent of Nigel Kneale again, particularly **The Creature**). This psychological warfare is one of the more successful sequences in the script. 'Someone's playing games with our minds,' says Ace.

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be powerful, weird or disturbing sounds, and these sounds just aren't realised. At the beginning of episode one, the Doctor and Ace are supposed to be responding to an extraordinary, eerie audio signal in the TARDIS, but the appropriate effect simply isn't there. What is there is disappointing in the extreme. Ben shakes his head in despair when he discusses it. 'And you wonder why I can't watch the show?'

This problem of inadequate sound effects runs right through the four episodes. When, near the end of the story, the Destroyer shouts 'At last!' it's supposed to be an apocalyptic eruption. 'What's that?' exclaim our astonished characters. 'It's nothing,' would be the appropriate answer, since the sound effect has completely let us down again.

The second, and final, climax of *Battlefield* comes when Morgaine teleports into the control room of the nuclear missile convoy which has become bogged down by the lake. The implied threat of this missile never really comes across to the viewer, because the shot of the bogged-down convoy simply looks like a bunch of vehicles casually parked by a body of water, perhaps so the drivers can go for a swim.

More crucially, we don't ever *see* the missile in question. It's theoretically inside one of the trucks instead of being on display in all its evil glory (the Doctor refers to nuclear weapons as having a 'graveyard stench'). This is probably factually accurate, but this was a time for dramatic licence, not factual accuracy. Anyway for reasons of authenticity, limited budget, or simply because no one thought it was important, the missile doesn't exist on-screen. Unfortunately this also means it never exists in the minds or emotions of the audience. Hence the threat never exists, or at best is extremely abstract.

Nonetheless this scene features some chilling performances and cracking dialogue provided by Ben. Morgaine demands to know the incantations which will unleash this dreadful weapon – 'The failsafe release code' she spits out, adapting swiftly to the language of this modern world, and bringing magic and technology together in a deadly synthesis.

The Doctor has to stop Morgaine detonating the missile and he does this by the unusual expedient of *talking* to her. He delivers what came to be known, rather irreverently, as 'the CND speech', a tirade against nuclear weapons which I have to confess that I wrote. I showed Ben the first draft of this dialogue for the Doctor and his response was succinct. 'It's too long,' he said. 'It's way too long.'

I dismissed his reaction. A 'loved' the speech. I loved every heartfelt word of it. The sequence was duly shot and eventually I saw the rushes and when I did, it was immediately clear. It was too long. It was way too long.

I sat with John in his office, playing the scene over and over again, finding little moments to trim here and there until finally it had been reduced to a reasonable length. In the process, I learned a crucial lesson. It's very simple to spot when someone else's writing is overlong. It's not so easy when it's your own stuff. The writer becomes attached to his own words. If the writer is also the script editor he has to learn to approach his own work with the same cold-eyed ruthlessness he'd apply to anyone else's. It's a lesson I never forgot.

The end result was very good, though. The fragments that were left of the long speech proved powerful and entirely effective, with its description of a child's eyes burned out by the flash of nuclear detonation: 'No more tears, only ashes.' (An image which was inspired, incidentally, by Peter Watkins' unforgettable BBC film *The War Game*.) We'd managed to cut a long, self-indulgent, unwieldy speech down to a terse, sharp, forceful one. But the place for such cutting is on the script page before you start shooting, not on videotape in post-production.

After the CND speech, Ben's dialogue resumes as the Doctor tells Morgaine that King Arthur is dead and gone, he's been dust for centuries. And, brilliantly, it turns out that Morgaine loved Arthur. Jean Marsh is superb here, showing tenderness and vulnerability and profound depths of regret as she remembers her lost love. 'When we were together, the air was like honey,' she says. It's another scene that sends a shiver down the spine. (Rather embarrassingly, Ben tells me that I actually wrote that bit of dialogue, too. Oh well.)

But for all the excellent material that lurks in the depths of the four episodes of *Battlefield*, it's difficult to get past the terribly shaky opening few minutes of the show, with Bambera's uncomprehending delivery of her catchphrase 'Shame', the pathetically battered prop which is supposed to be the TARDIS, the impotent sound effects, the inappropriate and overbearing music (uncharacteristic of Keff, who elsewhere delivers deft and effective themes and who saved *Paradise Towers*) and the utterly silly looking knights with their phoney, sparking gun blasts.

It's easy to see why Ben's tape was ejected just a couple of minutes into the episode and one can only speculate on how many other viewers bailed out almost before *Battlefield* begins, missing out on the flashes of genius that are still scattered through the show.

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Wolf-Time

First in a four-part adventure
by Ian Briggs.

Once again, Ace is at the
forefront of the plot and
again we have a period
setting which the BBC
recreates superbly.

Sgt Prozorov

PETER CZAJKOWSKI
Captain Sorin.....TOMEK BORK
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Petrossian.....MARK CONRAD
Vershinin.....MAREK ANTON
Sgt Leigh.....MARCUS HUTTON
Perkins.....CHRISTIE ANHOLT
Dr Judson.....DINSDALE LANDEN
Nurse Crane.....ANNE REID
Captain Bates

.....STEVAN RIMKAS
The Rev Mr Wainwright

.....NICHOLAS PARSONS
Miss Hardaker.....JANET HENFREY
Jean.....JOANN KENNY
Phyllis.....JOANNE BELL
Commander Millington

.....ALFRED LYNCH
Kathleen.....CORY PULMAN
Baby.....AARON HENLEY

Theme music composed by

KEN GRAINER

Incidental music MARK AYRES

Costume designer KEN FREW

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer DAVID LASKEY

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MALLETT

•CE:

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Wolf-Time

A four-part adventure
by Ian Briggs.

3: The Doctor knows what's
going on and isn't telling
Ace. The Cartmel
Masterplan is on fire now.

Commander Millington

.....ALFRED LYNCH
Dr Judson... DINSDALE LANDEN
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Rev Mr Wainwright

.....NICHOLAS PARSONS
Nurse Crane.....ANNE REID
Captain Bates.....STEVAN RIMKAS
Perkins.....CHRISTIE ANHOLT
Captain Sorin.....TOMEK BORK
Vershinin.....MAREK ANTON
Sgt Prozorov

.....PETER CZAJKOWSKI
Kathleen Dudman

.....CORY PULMAN
Baby.....AARON HENLEY
Jean.....JOANN KENNY
Phyllis.....JOANNE BELL
Sgt Leigh.....MARCUS HUTTON

Incidental music MARK AYRES

Sound arranger TID TIPPING

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MALLETT

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Wolf-Time

by Ian Briggs.

It's not a Super Ted toy. It's
clearly not a Super Ted toy.
The design is completely
different. Stop looking for
things to complain about.

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Prozorov.....PETER CZAJKOWSKI
Vershinin.....MAREK ANTON
Dr Judson.....DINSDALE LANDEN
Captain Sorin.....TOMEK BORK
Nurse Crane.....ANNE REID
Jean.....JOANN KENNY
Phyllis.....JOANNE BELL
Millington.....ALFRED LYNCH
Rev Mr Wainwright

.....NICHOLAS PARSONS
Miss Hardaker.....JANET HENFREY
Leigh.....MARCUS HUTTON
Perkins.....CHRISTIE ANHOLT
Captain Bates.....STEVAN RIMKAS
Kathleen.....CORY PULMAN
Baby.....AARON HENLEY

Incidental music MARK AYRES

Sound arranger TID TIPPING

Make-up designer DENISE BARONS

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer DAVID LASKEY

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MALLETT

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Wolf-Time

Last in a four-part adventure
by Ian Briggs.

Ace nearly ruins things by
giving the game away to
Fenric, but the Doctor
manages to resolve her issues
with her mum. Nicholas
Parsons dies.

Nurse Crane.....ANNE REID
Dr Judson.....DINSDALE LANDEN
Commander Millington

.....ALFRED LYNCH
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Captain Sorin.....TOMEK BORK
Kathleen Dudman

.....CORY PULMAN
Baby.....AARON HENLEY
Captain Bates

.....STEVAN RIMKAS
Sgt Leigh.....MARCUS HUTTON
Jean.....JOANN KENNY
Phyllis.....JOANNE BELL
Vershinin.....MAREK ANTON
Ancient batmovere

.....RAYMOND PRICKETT
Incidental music MARK AYRES

Sound arranger TID TIPPING

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director NICHOLAS MALLETT

(New week new look. Telling!)

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 13

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Aquatic vampires?

Tuesday 8 September 1987. *Time and the Rani* Part One had been broadcast the previous night, and I think even John Nathan-Turner had clocked that Pip and Jane's script was not a complete masterpiece. He told me that we wouldn't be using them again. Great. However, he was playing with the idea of using Malcolm Kohll again: 'I think Malcolm blossomed.'

Personally, I liked Malcolm very much, but I had other plans. Specifically, another Ian Briggs script. I reminded John of when we were looking for a new companion for the Doctor and we were comparing Malcolm's character Ray and Ian's character Ace, and how John himself had said there was no contest.

Thus began a long and demanding process that was both political and artistic. The political aspect was shepherding a new Ian Briggs script to the commissioning stage, and then into production, under the approval of John. The artistic aspect was the evolution of a new story which would satisfy Ian and me as a creative piece of work, as an adventure story, as science fiction, and as a **Doctor Who** story. It was the usual demanding combination but the script that would become *The Curse of Fenric* fulfilled it uniquely well.

When Ian first started coming up with ideas for **Doctor Who**, in the process that eventually gave us *Dragonfire*, it rapidly became clear that my judgement had been accurate. He wrote brilliantly and his scripts had real thematic depth. And his particular strength was coming up with fascinating three-dimensional characters. On the other hand, he knew little or nothing about science fiction at that stage and the early, pre-*Dragonfire* ideas he came up with had science fiction trappings which were merely that, tacked onto the plot and characters which were what really interested him.

All that had changed by the time we began to work on *The Curse of Fenric*. Ian hadn't exactly become a science fiction fan. But then, that wasn't what was required of him. He simply needed to have enough of an understanding of the possibilities of science fiction to build it into his story at a foundation level and to take advantage of its possibilities rather than just suffering it as something imposed on the 'real' drama of his script ideas. And by the time we started *The Curse of Fenric* Ian had reached this point and gone beyond it. He was emerging as an ideal **Doctor Who** writer.

In an odd way, Ian's work on **Doctor Who** was always intertwined with the writing of Alan Moore. Alan Moore was the British comics writer whose work (at that time, chiefly his **Swamp Thing** stories) had been my main inspiration when I was first approached by John and when I joined the show. Eventually, other influences would come to dominate (William Gibson's

cyberpunk novels) but they would never supplant Moore entirely. It was Alan Moore's work that inspired my first ever attempt at a **Doctor Who** story – the eco-parable *ſi*ad pitched to Jonathan Powell in my crucial job interview.

And, of course, it was Alan Moore who had inspired the 'crazy paving' monologue which had ended up being inserted into the conclusion of Ian's *Dragonfire*, much to Ian's chagrin and my own. Moore would also be a crucial influence on the first germ of an idea which eventually gave rise to *The Curse of Fenric*. So, who is Alan Moore and what was his connection with **Doctor Who**?

It's hard to describe the impact of Alan Moore's work on anyone who, like myself, was a fan of comic books in their childhood and then repudiated the whole medium as soon as they were old enough to appreciate what crap comics are. Not that comics are badly drawn. They are often beautifully drawn. But they are also often badly written. During the 1970s, at least, they were so invariably badly written that no adult could approach them as anything other than kitsch. There were a few honourable exceptions, of course, but these were mostly newspaper strips such as Peter O'Donnell's brilliant **Modesty Blaise** or Hal Foster's **Prince Valiant**. By and large, comic books were written with what seemed like a deliberate intent to produce ephemeral mediocrity.

Until Alan Moore came along. Moore took the extraordinary view that comics could be an art form, and an adult one at that. And he had the talent to prove that this was possible. When I read his stuff I was immediately converted, though when ſiried to tell other people about it I met with a certain amount of resistance. I remember the appalled look of a young flame haired film executive when I tried to explain to her how great **Swamp Thing** was. The fact that it was a comic and it was called **Swamp Thing** was enough for her. (Though a year or two later she had **Watchmen** and **V for Vendetta** jutting from her trendy shoulder bag. It had become okay to read comics by then, thanks to Alan Moore.)

I always thought that Moore would be an ideal writer for **Doctor Who** and when I joined the show it was one of my first priorities to try and track him down. But fate decided that I should bump into him by accident.

On a bright Saturday in February 1987, ſi breathed the cold winter air of Westminster as ſi approached a building called the Methodist Hall. Here at the seat of British government I was going to a Comic Mart. And here among those other early risers perusing the back issues, I recognised Alan Moore. He was a distinctive figure with his long hair and beard. I froze on the spot. Pathetic, I know. But only the night before I had been reading the latest **Swamp Thing** that he'd scripted and on my desk at the BBC was a yellow Post-it note that read 'Write to Alan Moore.' He he was, a tall man in a black suit with long

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connection with Dracula, and the Count's first landfall in England. The ocean association also suggested Vikings to Ian, who'd just returned from a holiday in Sweden. From here, Ian and I began to elaborate the details.

The key aspect to the story was a Second World War setting. I'd already determined that Earth-based historical stories had the strongest chance of working on-screen. *Delta and the Bannermen*, *Remembrance of the Daleks* and the Elizabethan sections of *Silver Nemesis* had established that.

Here we were going to do World War Two, but we wanted to get away from the standard Allies versus Germans dynamics, so we introduced Russian soldiers into the plot.

Ian's story for *The Curse of Fenric* was amazingly prescient. The incorporation of an Alan Turing-style scientist and an Enigma-type code-breaking machine were brilliant ideas, and decades ahead of the revival of interest in Turing which would come with Robert Harris's excellent novel *Enigma* and the intelligent film version of it.

We also decided, despite the cold war aspects of the story, that the apocalyptic threat in it would not be nuclear weapons but chemical ones. 'I want to call the poisonous substance dioxin,' said Ian, 'Because dioxin really is a threat to the environment and if some little kid picks up on the name and registers that it's dangerous, then that's a good thing.'

So the elements of Fenric came together, Vikings, Russian soldiers, chemical warfare, computers, logic games, chess, the Second World War, and of course aquatic vampires. John was enthusiastic about the story but he had some legitimate concerns. The idea was complex and in danger of becoming confusing to the average viewer. It was a story that reached deep into the past and far into the future. We needed some strong, simple concept to thread it all together. One day, I walked into John's office and said, 'Why don't we make it a curse? Call it *The Curse of Fenric* so right up front people understand that it's something ancient which is having an effect in the present.' John slowly began to smile.

The Curse of Fenric begins confidently, with its moody underwater shots, the Russian troops paddling to shore, and the Doctor and Ace arriving on a secret naval base in full 1940s regalia. It also kicks off with some great Ian Briggs dialogue ('If this is a secret naval base, I'm Lord Nelson,' says Ace).

The superior script and authentic period setting make for a particularly strong story. And a strong cast does it justice. Even in the relatively minor role of Miss Hardaker we had a superlative actress, Janet Henfrey. Janet had played the unforgettable schoolteacher in Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* and I made a point of seeking her out during rehearsals and telling how great she'd

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repellent.

The whole vampire thing had by now begun to worry John Nathan-Turner. He was concerned that the show would be too horrific, particularly for small children. He decided he didn't really want to do a vampire story.

At one time, this would have been cause for panic. But by now I'd learned to be resourceful to get things to work on **Doctor Who**. So Ian and I simply pulled the same trick that Kevin and I had worked on *Silver Nemesis*. In that case we had merely changed every reference to 'Nazis' to 'Paramilitaries'; now Ian and I went through *The Curse of Fenric* scripts and removed every reference to vampires, replacing it with a word Ian had coined, 'Haemovores' – or 'blood-eaters'. *Plus ça change*. This global substitution did the trick. ('Those vampires – mean Haemovores,' says Ace, rather cheekily, at one point.) John was mollified and the vampires, I mean Haemovores, stayed in the script.

Unfortunately, as so often happened, the rubber Haemovore masks that looked awe inspiring at rest became almost comical once attempts were made to animate them. In particular, the chief monster, the Ancient Haemovore, was risible. He stood in a tunnel, his gills pulsing and his eyes moving convincingly enough, but his jaw flapped haplessly and comically during this, his big speech. Various bits of padding and sticky tape were applied to try and remedy it. I sighed and resigned myself to another near miss in the special effects.

There is plenty that does succeed in *The Curse of Fenric*, though. The conflict between the Russians and the British is a definite bonus, making the story feel relevant and modern, looking ahead to the cold war and the global tensions that were still dominating the world when we were filming. And the choice of chemical weapons makes the story seem painfully relevant even now, in a new century.

Above all though, is the stature of Ian Briggs's writing, with its depth and wit and edge. 'Thinking machines,' says Dr Judson (Dinsdale Landen). 'Yes, but whose thoughts will they think?' asks Commander Millington (Alfred Lynch). Even the simplest moments are transformed by the atmospheric accuracy of Ian's dialogue. Jean and Phyllis (Joann Kenny and Joanne Bell) are two teenagers evacuated from London. When they walk along the beach they find a Haemovore artefact, a futuristic scrap of metal. 'It feels all funny and tingly,' they exclaim. 'It's like electric!'

One particularly resonant and telling scene involves Kathleen Dudman (Cory Pulman) and her baby. Ace asks, quite innocently, if Kathleen is married. Kathleen is offended and her icy response causes Ace to realise her blunder and the vast gulf in the social attitude towards unmarried mothers between the 1940s and the 1980s.

There are also moments of wild humour, even at the centre of a cyclone of action and terror: ‘Don’t interrupt me when I’m eulogising,’ says Dr Judson, now transformed into the demonic Fenric.

Along with these internal dynamics, *The Curse of Fenric* offers plenty of external action. Action sequences weren’t Nick Mallett’s forte. Scenes like the girl vampires’ confrontation with Reverend Wainwright (Nicholas Parsons) in the graveyard could have worked, despite being shot in broad daylight, but they just aren’t shot properly. They needed to be staged by someone who understood the visual possibilities of the suspense and action – the way that Alan Wareing handled *Survival*. The girl vampires certainly look suitably scary, with their fangs and talons (although this may have become one of John Nathan-Turner’s reasons for not wanting to go this route later with the Cheetah People in *Survival*; maybe he just didn’t want to repeat himself). The various Haemovore attack sequences, obviously based on **The Night of the Living Dead**, are equally unconvincing and the siege on the church, which should have been a highpoint of suspense, action and horror just falls flat as the floppy costumes of the creatures try to thrust in through the doors and windows.

But the Doctor is suitably powerful and resourceful. When he and Ace first arrive at the base, guards are soon swarming over them, so the Doctor deals with this by the simple expedient of preparing his own letter of authorisation from the War Office. He hammers it out on a typewriter then signs and countersigns it himself, using two different pens in both hands simultaneously. A moment later, the ink barely dry, he proffers it to the guards who are pouring in to arrest him and they immediately lower their guns and apologise – they didn’t realise such an important figure was coming to visit.

I loved this scene and I felt it was a key moment in the rehabilitation of the Doctor. It shows him as powerful, resourceful and witty. He’s no longer the fall guy. He’s in charge, and in a quirky alien way, too. Plus Sylvester looks great in a duffel coat.

And of course, since this is an Ian Briggs script, there’s a powerful erotic element. The scene where Ace seduces a guard (Marcus Hutton) to distract him has some fascinating dialogue, which is almost blank verse: ‘Is he making the right moves or just going through the motions?’ In fact, Ian and I had to hastily adjust the dialogue in this scene to account for unseasonable weather conditions on location (snow in April). It originally featured lines like ‘Too hot. Clothes sticking to me.’ These lines were greeted with howls of cynical laughter by the freezing crew, so Ian came up with ‘There’s a wind whipping up. I can feel it through my clothes.’

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7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

The Bestiary

Part one of a three-part adventure by Marc Platt. Andrew and Marc create a story which plays to the BBC's strengths. A period setting in studio sets hopes high for next year.

Mrs Pritchard.....SYLVIA SYMS
Mrs Grose.....BRENDA KEMPNER
Rev Ernest Matthews

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Gwendoline

KATHERINE SCHLESINGER
Josiah.....IAN HOGG
Redvers.....MICHAEL COCHRANE
Nimrod.....CARL FORGIONE
Control.....SHARON DUCE

Theme music composed by
RON GRAINGER
Incidental music MARK AYRES
Costume designer KEN TREW
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer NICK SOMERVILLE
Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
Director ALAN WAREING

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

The Bestiary: part two of a three-part adventure by Marc Platt.

While the viewers are confused, the cast and crew are having a great time. Ace is at the forefront of the storytelling.

Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Nimrod.....CARL FORGIONE
Control.....SHARON DUCE
Gwendoline

KATHERINE SCHLESINGER
MacKenzie.....FRANK WINDSOR
Josiah.....IAN HOGG
Mrs Pritchard.....SYLVIA SYMS
Rev Matthews

JOHN NETTLETON
Mrs Grose.....BRENDA KEMPNER
Redvers Fenn-Cooper

MICHAEL COCHRANE
Incidental music MARK AYRES
Make-up designer JOAN STRIBLING
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer NICK SOMERVILLE
Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
Director ALAN WAREING

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

The Bestiary

Final part of a three-part adventure by Marc Platt. Burnt toast, primordial soup, husks and damned tsetse flies.

Control.....SHARON DUCE
Josiah.....IAN HOGG
Nimrod.....CARL FORGIONE
Gwendoline

KATHERINE SCHLESINGER
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Mrs Pritchard.....SYLVIA SYMS
Light.....JOHN HALLAM
MacKenzie.....FRANK WINDSOR
Redvers Fenn-Cooper

MICHAEL COCHRANE

Incidental music MARK AYRES
Visual effects designer
MALCOLM JAMES
Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL
Designer NICK SOMERVILLE
Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
Director ALAN WAREING

•MUSIC: the theme from 'Doctor Who' is performed by Keff McCulloch and included on 'The World of BBC TV Themes', available from record shops on T.F. cassette and CD

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 14

& + , 4 , 4

A very big explosion. Very soon.

Although (in the chapter on *Battlefield*) I've discussed my exhaustion with fighting a system that just didn't understand science fiction, *Ghost Light* showed a way forward out of the trap. It suggested an approach to **Doctor Who** which would have allowed us to spin proper science fiction stories yet guarantee they were well executed on-screen.

The crucial point was that while BBC design teams were frequently baffled by science fiction – anything set in outer space or the distant future – they were the best in the world at doing *historical* drama. The Victorian setting for *Ghost Light* would prove wonderfully successful and I would begin to think about doing a season of all historical stories.

Ghost Light was the brainchild of Marc Platt. When I first sat down at my desk as script editor, I was besieged by would-be **Doctor Who** writers, many of them hardcore fans. Some of them were fellow BBC workers. Marc fell into both these categories.

I loved **Doctor Who** and knew the show intimately; and he worked at the BBC, in a bureaucratic niche entitled Radio Programme Index where his labours, endlessly cataloguing radio transmissions, were worthy of a story by Borges. But Marc immediately distinguished himself from the usual writers who were submitting unsolicited material. He scored a lot of points because, while his writing might have been informed by a deep love and knowledge of the show, it wasn't constricted or crippled by it like most fan offerings. It displayed real talent. So much so that I invited Marc in for a chat.

And it was only when he sat down in the office that Marc revealed that he was a fellow worker in the BBC hive. This scored him even more points, because most aspiring **Doctor Who** writers would have assumed that being in the Corporation would put them on an inside track. Some had even sent me scripts in the internal post, thinking this added to their cachet. Marc had taken the opposite tack, concealing his affiliation until his work had earned him an invitation to talk to us. I thought this was classy behaviour and was duly impressed.

The story Marc had sent in was called 'Shrine'. It was set in Russia in the early nineteenth century, after the time of Napoleon, and showed the influence of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Pushkin ('That's pretentious for you,' said Marc). Marc was an opera lover, so he'd been particularly inspired by **Eugene Onegin**, which was by Tchaikovsky from Pushkin – the Russian Shakespeare. 'Onegin set the Russian theme off because I just loved it.'

Pushkin or no Pushkin, 'Shrine' was sufficiently impressive to draw the following letter from me:

(Addressed to Marc's flat in Aubert Park, North London)

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I wasn't the first script editor to sense that Marc had talent, and the peculiar knack that might make for a really good **Doctor Who** writer. The first piece of writing he'd ever sent in to the show had elicited a letter from the legendary **Doctor Who** script editor (and writer) Robert Holmes, who had said, 'Of the many unsolicited scripts I receive every year, yours was the only one of any merit whatsoever.' Holmes gave him a list of things to read but moved on from the job before he could get any further with commissioning Marc. Several such near misses ensued.

Then Marc approached me.

Wednesday 2 March 1988. This was the day Ben and I went on the Dalek recce at the school in Macbeth Street. Two hours later, we were back in Union House meeting a prospective new writer, who was Marc Platt. Marc said he didn't like *Dragonfire* much. *Dragonfire* was Ian Briggs' script, which was transmitted as the last story of last season. Marc was a pleasant-faced, bald young man. The slightly predatory jut of his ears made me think of an amiable Caliban. He sat in my office at the BBC building in Shepherd's Bush, beaming at Ben and us. Marc was a bizarrely talented writer and we were auditioning him as a possible for the next season – assuming that there would be a next season, and that I would have anything to do with it (that eternal television mantra).

'Let me be more specific about that,' said Marc. 'I didn't like *Dragonfire* except for that wonderful final scene of Sylvester's, with lines like "days like crazy paving".'

'You've said the right thing,' said Ben glancing at me, his eyebrows at a sardonic angle, 'He wrote that.'

I immediately got Marc to come up with ideas for the show. His next effort was *Cat's Cradle*, a story which featured the TARDIS turned inside out and a monster called the Process – which was rather ill-defined for a **Doctor Who** villain. I told Marc gently, 'Just the first episode of *Cat's Cradle* would use up the entire year's budget,' and he indefatigably set to work on another idea.

This proved to be *Lungbarrow*, which is in some ways a lost classic of **Doctor Who** to be set beside Douglas Adams' *Shada* (though none of 'Lungbarrow' was actually filmed; Marc eventually turned it into a novel). Coming on like an unholy hybrid of Mervyn Peake and Agatha Christie, it featured the Doctor's return to his ancestral home on Gallifrey, the titular Lungbarrow, which was no ordinary house. One of Marc's notes accompanying a revised draft of the story read, 'The furniture is getting more aggressive.' More aggressive furniture was just what we needed, because

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director for a writer to work with. One day, he called me into the office and told me about his plans for the maids in the house. The script called for them to emerge at nightfall, just as the clock in the hallway strikes six, appearing from alcoves and cupboards in the wall. Alan said that instead of simply making their entrance by walking, he wanted to have the maids slide out from their recesses in an unearthly fashion, using a kind of skateboard device (he had just been watching *The Blues Brothers* where there's a similar scene).

Ghost Light is the jewel in the crown of the Seventh Doctor's adventures. It begins in a moody, convincing fashion and seldom sets a foot wrong. Marc immediately stakes out the territory of the story, weird menace and witty Victorian tropes. The housekeeper, Mrs Pritchard (Sylvia Syms), presents a tray to an unseen captive creature behind a sliding panel. 'I've brought your dinner – and your copy of *The Times*.' The TARDIS appears and the Doctor and Ace step out into one of the creepiest, funniest and most effective *Doctor Who* stories ever.

Sylvester never looked better than he does in this story, dressed in 'dark Doctor' mode in his chocolate brown jacket. And the same is true of Sophie. Ken Trew continued the trend with her costumes he began on *Survival* and her outfit reveals just how lovely she is, instead of concealing her in the shapeless swathes of a bomber jacket. Sophie seems to be reaching a new maturity, along with Ace. As they look around the room where the TARDIS has materialised, the Doctor and Ace are under observation, although this is staged too subtly, with just the glowing eye of the rocking horse to clue the audience in.

By now, Sylvester and Sophie had both evolved into their roles. The Doctor had his humour and mystery and core of immense strength. Ace was gutsy, had her own street-level wit and humour and, above all, was intelligent. Unlike other companions, she didn't need to receive constant words-of-one-syllable explanations. Instead, she's always guessing, anticipating, meeting the Doctor halfway. 'He's a Neanderthal, isn't he?' she says. 'Is it a race memory?' Or, elsewhere, 'This is a stone spaceship.' And in the opening scenes, when they find a snuff box lying on the floor and the Doctor points a device at it, provoking a sinister clicking, she immediately gets the point. 'It's radioactive!' Then she asks a highly sensible question, 'Is it safe?' And the Doctor's response was one of my own public safety warnings. 'There is no safe level,' he says bluntly.

As the Doctor and Ace prowl the house, we're treated to Mark Ayres' best score for the show. The theme for Redvers Fenn-Cooper is a particular delight, with its hint of the darkest jungles, or rather of the Victorian fantasy of the darkest jungles. Redvers is a fantastic character, beautifully played by

Michael Cochrane. Like all the actors in this notable cast, he could relate to the script and his performance is grounded in familiar reference points (plucky explorers, the Empire, etc). This was the great joy of our Victorian setting. ‘Damn tsetse flies,’ mutters Redvers as the radiation counter buzzes at his back. Then he brandishes a gun at the Doctor who coolly asks, ‘Is that a Chinese fowling piece?’ – a line I asked Marc to put in as a reference to *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*.

After they have disarmed him, Redvers is taken away by the denizens of the house, crying ‘I don’t want to go back to the interior’ – an especially poignant plea from a man who is a prisoner in his own mind.

The sets for *Ghost Light* are faultless and they are moodily lit and beautifully shot. The rich darkness and powerful atmosphere make me wonder how *The Happiness Patrol* might have turned out if Henry Barber had been involved.

And inhabiting this shadowy world is a wonderful cast of characters brought to life by a dream cast. Katharine Schlesinger’s Gwendoline is a beautiful young woman with an unsettling hint of something strange about her. She’s a foil for Ace and when they both dress for dinner in gentlemen’s suits the whole story moves into another gear. We’re not in Kansas anymore, nor even in the usual West London mindset of a **Doctor Who** story.

Katharine Schlesinger also perches at a piano and does a marvellous performance of a song, ‘That’s the way to the zoo. The monkey house is nearly full but there’s room enough for you.’ She sings beautifully but the lyrics are chilling in view of what is about to happen to the dogmatic clerical bigot, Reverend Matthews (John Nettleton). He ends up de-evolved into a hairy simian brute, then killed, stuffed and mounted in a glass case with a label reading ‘Homo Victorianus Ineptus’. (‘I think I’m going to throw up,’ says Ace when she sees this nasty piece of taxidermy.)

But the song Katharine sings is also a remarkable piece of synchronicity in other ways, capturing the evolutionary theme of *Ghost Light* in exactly the peculiar Victorian manner the story requires. And it’s a genuine period song, provided for Marc by the BBC Gramophone Library, who took pains to provide the perfect piece.

Other stalwarts in the cast include Ian Hogg’s Josiah, master of the house and Gwendoline’s guardian; there’s a suggestion of a wonderfully unwholesome relationship between her and her ‘uncle’. Frank Windsor plays the obtuse Inspector Mackenzie, who is the occasion for a lot of terrific dialogue. ‘Now, Inspector, perhaps you can help us with our enquiries,’ says the Doctor. Or the terrifically gruesome wisecrack where he’s referred to as ‘The cream of Scotland Yard’ after Light has reduced him to primordial soup.

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7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Catflap

Part one of a three-part adventure by Rona Munro. A contemporary Earth setting is again much easier for the BBC designers to achieve on the programme's budget. We do still end up in a quarry though.

Woman.....KATHLEEN BIDMEAD
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
The Master....ANTHONY AINLEY
Paterson.....JULIAN HOLLOWAY
Stuart.....SEAN OLIVER
Harvey.....NORMAN FACE
Len.....GARETH HALE
Ange.....KATE EATON
Karra.....LISA BOWERMAN
Shreela...SAKUNTALA RAMANEE
Midge.....WILL BARTON
Derek.....DAVID JOHN

Theme music composed by
RON GRAINER

Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN

Costume designer KEN TREW

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer NICK SOMERVILLE

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director ALAN WARREN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Catflap

Part two of a three-part adventure by Rona Munro.

Like all the other new writers during the Cartmel era, Rona Munro brings a fresh new approach to *Doctor Who*.

Paterson.....JULIAN HOLLOWAY
The Master....ANTHONY AINLEY
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Shreela...SAKUNTALA RAMANEE
Midge.....WILL BARTON
Derek.....DAVID JOHN
Karra.....LISA BOWERMAN

Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN

Stunt arranger PAUL REASMAN

Make-up designer JOAN STRIBLING

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer NICK SOMERVILLE

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director ALAN WARREN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.35pm Doctor Who

starring Sylvester McCoy.

Catflap

Final part of an three-part adventure by Rona Munro.

Somewhere the tea's getting cold.

The Master....ANTHONY AINLEY
Midge.....WILL BARTON
Paterson.....JULIAN HOLLOWAY
Derek.....DAVID JOHN
Ace.....SOPHIE ALDRED
Shreela...SAKUNTALA RAMANEE
Karra.....LISA BOWERMAN
Squeak.....ADELE SILVA
Neighbour....MICHELLE MARTIN

Incidental music DOMINIC GLYNN

Visual effects designer

MALCOLM JAMES

Script editor ANDREW CARTMEL

Designer NICK SOMERVILLE

Producer JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director ALAN WARREN

•CEEFAX SUBTITLES

CHAPTER 15

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Down the plughole without a paddle.

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immediately spotted in the audience a Turkish ex-girlfriend of mine. We said hello, what a coincidence, and it's nice to talk to her, but my girlfriend and her boyfriend couldn't get us separated quickly enough. Both the jealous type, I guess. My Turkish ex-girlfriend is beautiful, intelligent, funny and we were together for a year or two. And yet the sight of her left me strangely unmoved. Maybe I wanted to forget the person I was when I was with her.

The Way to Go Home was a further hint of Rona's considerable talent. She would go on to write award-winning plays and be commissioned to write movies, the summit of achievement for a screenwriter. She wrote **Ladybird Ladybird** for Ken Loach and a German film called **Aimée & Jaguar**.

Rona is a brilliant writer and her script for *Survival* was full of wit and intelligence but it was also good strong **Doctor Who**. Along with Ben and Marc Platt, Rona was the only writer with any real affinity or fondness for science fiction. She was science fiction literate and although her early work had tended to imagery and impressionism (magic realism, I suppose), she quickly developed a formidable facility for telling an effective adventure story.

In discussing the kind of storytelling we needed, I suggested she look at Tintin. I believe that Hergé's comic strip is a model of clear, concise and gripping storytelling, with rich plot, adroit characterisation and plenty of humour.

Rona just laughed. 'I never could take Tintin seriously. With that haircut and those trousers. He's such a wimp.'

Rona and I became good friends when my girlfriend Kate Druce and I went up to the Edinburgh festival and stayed with her and her boyfriend Sandy Draper (nicknamed Cindy Dripper at school). We hit it off and there was a crew of us who spent the next two Hogmanays (New Years) together in an assortment of freezing cottages. I remember sitting in the lounge of one such on the Isle of Skye, seeing in 1989, when I found myself taking a solo stand, arguing against an entire troupe of fast-witted, acerbic Scottish feminist comedians about censorship.

Survival was 1989's all-location three-parter, the Yin to the Yang of *Ghost Light*'s all-studio three-parter. John was still ingeniously turning what was officially the budget for a single six-parter into two three-part stories. He wanted to do this because six-part stories were unwieldy, and it was also enormously beneficial to me, since it allowed me the diversity of four writers a year instead of just three.

It also allowed me to commission Rona. The script that developed in discussions with her was called, at one point, *Cat Flap*, a title which would have been brilliant, though it would inevitably have been much misunderstood by fans. What Rona was getting at was a phenomenon known to anyone who's

ever had a cat flap. You get all sorts of things coming in through it, unwanted, uninvited creatures...

And the notion was that someone has created a cat flap that opens onto the Earth, allowing unpleasant alien predators access.

John was open, as ever, to giving new talent a chance and, after meeting with Rona and watching her story evolve, he agreed to commission her. However, as a kind of insurance policy on an unproven writer, he wanted to involve a tried and tested **Doctor Who** villain. So we had to incorporate into the story the Master (Anthony Ainley), an evil renegade Time Lord – unlike Sylvester’s benign renegade Time Lord. Being a realist, Rona didn’t object to having an established **Doctor Who** villain grafted onto her story and would actually make good use of the character of the Master.

Survival would begin and end in an Earth setting, a very mundane setting. In fact, Ace’s old stomping ground of Perivale, a suburb of west London. Ian Briggs had established Perivale as a kind of hell of boredom from which Ace had been eager to escape. In fact, it’s a perfectly agreeable place, leafy and green, and I felt a bit bad for the abuse it receives in *Survival*. Here in Perivale, Ace and the Doctor would discover that Ace’s old friends were the victims of alien aggressors. The intelligent, savage Cheetah People had found access to our world through the assistance of animals who looked just like domestic cats. These ‘Kitlings’ (a great name coined by Rona) manifested telepathic powers. They were the biological equivalent of the matter transmitters in *Remembrance of the Daleks* or *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*.

The Cheetah People and the Kitlings and their chosen prey (human beings and the odd Time Lord or two) had a rather complex, symbiotic relationship which also involved the Cheetah People’s unstable volcanic planet. This all seemed clear enough to Rona and me as we evolved the script, stage by stage, but it aroused a certain amount of bafflement from the production crew and I ended up writing a long memo to Alan’s team giving the natural history of the Cheetah People, the Kitlings and their world.

In the script itself, some of the more complex issues are made clear in some pithy, evocative dialogue. The Cheetah People, the Doctor and the Master are among those who have been teleported by the Kitlings and find themselves trapped on an alien planet. But the Kitlings can’t take them away again, it’s a one-way teleportation. The Doctor grasps why: ‘They can only return home with their prey,’ he says.

Rona then shapes the solution with neat ingenuity. ‘We need an animal whose home is Earth,’ says the Doctor. The Master overhears him and promptly captures Midge, a teenager who is indeed turning into an animal under the influence of the planet, and uses him to return to Earth.

Survival has a lot going for it. For one thing, Sylvester was never better. Perhaps responding to a script by a Scots writer (and a brilliant Scots writer at that) and a story that is rooted more in real emotions than in science fiction abstractions, he gives a faultless performance.

We were also lucky enough to have Alan Wareing directing. Alan had earned my respect with the good work he'd done on *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* and it was a relief to know he was going to be responsible for two stories this season. Alan used the word 'achieve' a lot; he was always seeking to achieve more in the stories he directed for us, and it showed. When he first read the *Survival* scripts, he actually went to the zoo to look at cheetahs, which is rather more than Rona or I ever did.

Episode one of *Survival* begins strongly with adroit, atmospheric music from Dominic Glynn and a deceptively peaceful, normal urban setting as a man washing his car is attacked. The fact that we don't see the assailant is very effective. Alan Wareing stages the sequence extremely well, with the car wash bucket being knocked over as visual counterpoint to the violent abduction.

Then the Doctor and Ace appear and we immediately know that this innocent, mundane environment is going to be the setting for some kind of unearthly adventure. These opening scenes are full of promise. There is a suspenseful undercurrent of anticipation, Sylvester and Sophie have never been better, and the characterisation and dialogue are superb.

Things go off the rails rather soon, though, when the first Kitling appears. The Kitlings are supposed to look just like ordinary black cats. Rona and I had imagined when the script was being written that real cats would be used. But cats, unlike dogs, are considered hard to train and unreliable for filming. So the fatal decision was made to create an animatronic cat for the show.

'The reason they went for the animatronic cat,' said Mike Tucker, 'was because of a show starring Norman Lovett called *I, Lovett*. That show featured an animatronic dog that everybody was very impressed by. That's why Malcolm James got the gig on *Survival*. He'd done *I, ½ Lovett*. But the problem is that a dog is at least twice the size of a cat. An animatronic cat is way too small. You can't get your hand into the head to operate it or even do the movements of the body properly by hand. With hindsight we could have built a cat that was twice life size and used it for the close-up shots, where there's nothing to give reference to the distortion in scale. But that's with hindsight.'

If the animatronic cat failed to convince, and it definitely did, it was not for lack of trying. I know that Paul McGuiness, one of the visual effects assistants and a highly talented designer, worked furiously all night trying to

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Photograph courtesy of Mark Wymann



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Photograph courtesy of Ian Briggs



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Photograph courtesy of Mike Tucker



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Outside the 'Acton Hilton', the BBC Rehearsal Rooms: Susie Brazier and Ian Briggs in the rear, Sophie Aldred and special effects genius Lindsay MacGowan in the front, and me



Photographs courtesy of Andrew Cartmel

Above, left: *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*

Above, right: *Doctor Who*

Doctor Who



Photograph courtesy of Stephen Wyatt

Paradise Towers

Photograph courtesy of Andrew Carmel



A fetching Sophie Aldred on location for *Silver Nemesis*, reclining beside the beautiful retro ghetto-blaster built for her by Mike Tucker

Photograph courtesy of Mark Wymann



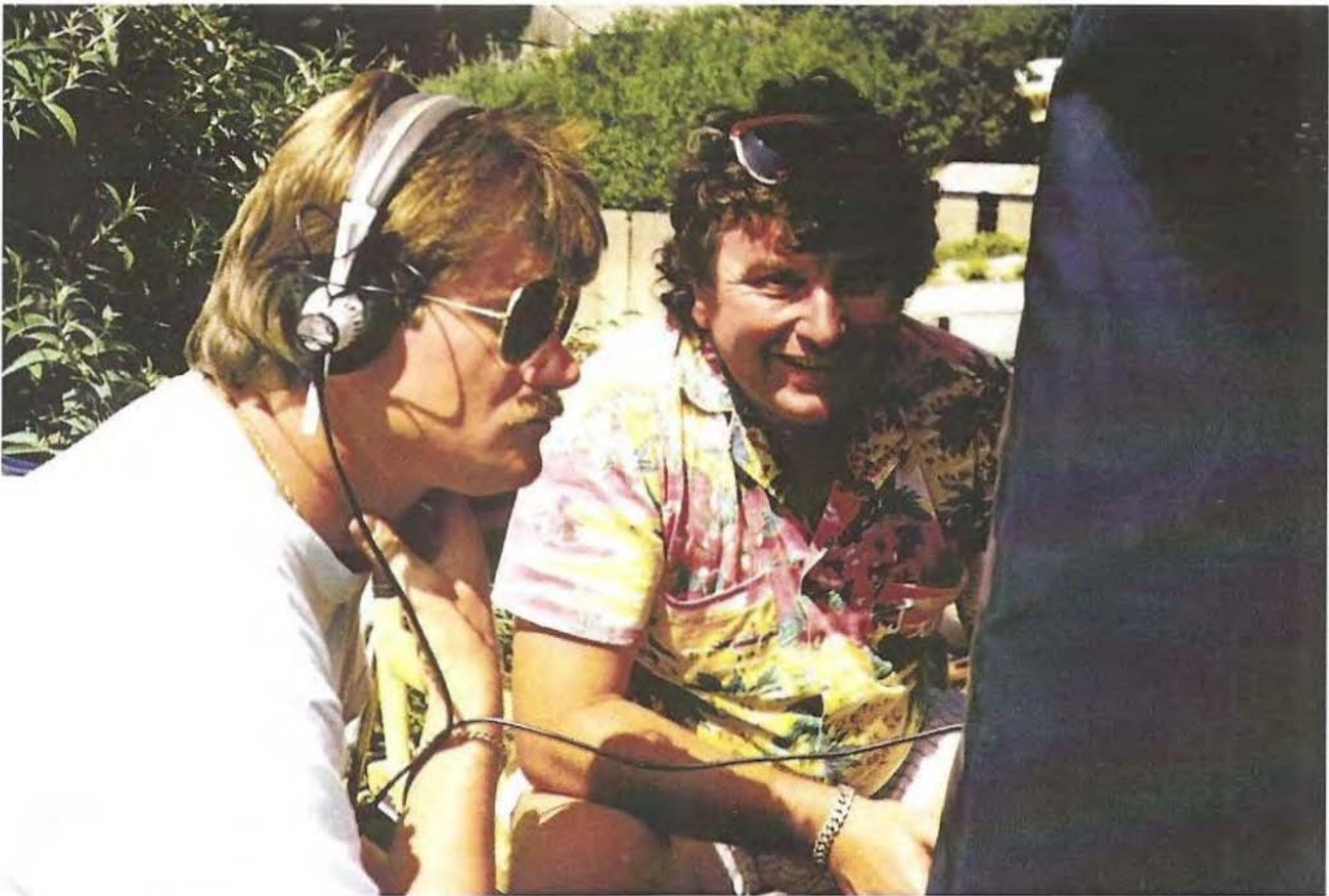
Sylvester and Sophie on location for *The Curse of Fenric*

Photograph courtesy of Steve Cook



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Photograph courtesy of Sophie Aldred



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Stephen Mansfield and Ken Trew help Raymond Trickett into his Ancient Haemovore costume.



The mask was designed by Susan Moore and Stephen Mansfield

chase in the playground with Ace dodging around slides and swings. But none of it is enough to compensate for those fatally cuddly costumes. As soon as I saw them, my heart sank and I knew we'd had it. The worst parts of the costumes were the hands, or paws. Where they should have been lean, skinny, menacing talons they were instead chubby cumbersome and rather endearing. In fact Mike Tucker told me the hands were built around gardening gloves, 'And the feet are Wellington boots.'

Rona and I had originally intended the Cheetah People to be very humanoid, with the minimum of make-up. They would have had fangs, talons, contact lenses, possibly pointed ears and whiskers and perhaps some trace of fur on their bodies. This was all part of my policy to have the monsters in our stories as near to ordinary humans as possible, because we couldn't rely on costumes, make-up or special effects to deliver the goods on anything more emphatically alien. But John was onto me, and he insisted that we should have 'proper monsters'. The Cheetah People would be full-blown creature costumes instead of sparingly applied prosthetics. And as soon as that decision was made, we were dead in the water.

If only the Cheetah People had looked like Mags in *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*. If only the animatronic cat had been replaced with footage of a real one...

Or, if it had been ten years later, we could have used CGI. This is one area where computer effects could have saved the day. If the Cheetah People had been imaginatively evoked as a computer-generated effect they would have allowed *Survival* to develop from a brilliant script to a brilliant show. As it is, we had a brilliant script but an uneven show.

So, at the end of episode one, Ace is captured by a teddy bear on horseback and spirited off to another planet.

In the early stages of discussions with Rona, I'd been hoping for an Earth-based story, for all the usual reasons of wanting to avoid a phoney alien environment. John insisted on another planet, just as he'd insisted on full-on monster suits for the Cheetah People. But unlike the Cheetah suits, the planet location wasn't a complete debacle.

Thanks to Alan Wareing's knack for strong visuals, Warmwell Quarry in Dorset manages to look interesting and passably alien. The video-processed pink sky, actually something I'd lobbied for, is never especially convincing though. And the highly artificial trickling of video smoke which are supposed to signify volcanoes could hardly look any more fake. There is, however, a great scene where the Doctor and Sergeant Paterson ride along through this desert landscape on horseback and Dominic Glynn provides some splendid

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AFTERWORD

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My first memory of Andrew Cartmel is of a tall lanky guy loping across the BBC North Acton rehearsal studio towards me at the end of the read through for my first **Doctor Who** story, *Dragonfire*.

‘Cool outfit,’ he said, passing an approving glance over my army surplus shorts, charity shop blue and white stripy T-shirt and black Doc Marten lace ups. ‘Do you think that would be a good look for Ace?’

So began a truly collaborative relationship which resulted in a ‘good look’ and a character who, twenty six years on, I am still immensely proud to have played. Ace would simply not have happened without Andrew Cartmel.

And although he and JN-T were like chalk and cheese — one the bespectacled intellectual, his softly modulated tones talking politics and popular underground culture, the other flamboyant, Hawaiian-shirted, all eyes and teeth, fags and vodka — somehow this strange partnership engendered mutual respect and understanding.

JN-T seemed to give Andrew *carte blanche* when it came to the characterisation details, possibly because he recognised that Ace’s character was one that was outside his world of show biz and glitz and very much in Andrew’s of student politics and punk.

Andrew and I would keep a weather eye open for what the kids on the street were saying and doing. Andrew owned a (then) state of the art Sinclair portable computer which he carried everywhere with him and would input the latest Ace phrases we (and the writers) came up with: ‘Gordon Bennet, what a bunch of spots.’ ‘You toe rag.’ And of course the universal ‘wicked!’ Some had to be translated, diluted or adjusted. We couldn’t fall foul of the BBC policies on swearing or religion, of course, which often proved tricky.

As a complete television newbie, I found Andrew’s presence on set reassuring as he was totally supportive and appreciative of my performance. I was reminded of this recently when recording Andrew’s **Big Finish** audio stories at Moat Studios. At one point I looked over to the gallery and saw Andrew leaning politely towards the director, obviously making a suggestion, giving a note, in his quiet polite way.

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EPILOGUE

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It's a brilliant summer's day in February 2001 and I've just stepped off a plane in Wellington, New Zealand. I've spent the last 25 hours literally flying halfway around the world to end up here, to script edit a new television show.

I'm working on **Dark Knight**, a sword and sorcery re-telling of the Ivanhoe legend. A taxi is taking me to my hotel and I'm staring out the window of the car, blinking in the brilliant sunlight. I ask the driver what that eerie noise is. It takes him a moment to work out what I'm talking about because he's so accustomed to it, then he tells me it's the local insects. Ten minutes later I'm stumbling into my hotel room. After all those long hours on the plane I find that the concrete floor of the hotel is heaving and swaying under my legs as if I'm still in midair. I haven't slept a wink and all I want to do is crash in bed. But there's a message from the studios. They need me out there right now, to help salvage a script.

I splash some water on my face and go down to the lobby where Keith Claxton is waiting. Keith is one of the directors on the show. He drives me out to Avalon Studios in Lower Hutt. The drive along the freeway takes us past a beautiful bay of blue water on our right, tiered green hills on our left. I'm half asleep in a car driving through paradise, thinking of a day almost 13 years ago when I was driving through west London, on the way to a location for the Dalek story. Then I was talking to Ben Aaronovitch. Now I'm talking to Keith Claxton. New collaborators, new allies.

Soon we're at the studios and I'm unlocking my office. From the window there is a gorgeous vista of blue sky and distant green headlands. I switch on my computer and open the window to breathe the clean, fresh air. Immediately some beautiful white doves land on the window sill and come into my office to make friends. Soon the office is full of birds, there's dove shit on my computer, and I'm at the heart of script conferences and rewrites.

Dark Knight will prove to be an invigorating, frustrating, challenging blend of occasionally dodgy special effects and sometimes brilliant writing... Why do I have this sense of déjà vu?

Terry Marcel, the producer, takes me down to the edit suite to watch some material. There's a blonde goddess in the lift and a dwarf in the canteen. We

sit in air conditioned darkness in front of a bank of screens and watch some footage together.

The witch needs new dialogue, the werewolves are making the wrong noises and the winged monster's prosthetic hands look silly in the close ups.

Never mind, we'll get it right next season.

Assuming that there is a next season, and that I have anything to do with it (that eternal television mantra).

Andrew Cartmel

London ¹ January 2005

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drama such as **Wycliffe**, **Inspector Lynley** and **The Last Detective**. Pip and Jane are reportedly still bad-mouthing me in interviews...

Long may they all)... H•

And, meanwhile, it seems **Doctor Who** will go on forever.

I certainly hope so.

Andrew Cartmel

London, 12th October 2013



DOCTOR WHO AUDITION PIECE #1

by % * 0 4 * , # 4

(The DOCTOR is busy. MEL comes in.)

MEL	Well, I suppose it's time.
DOCTOR	Time? Strange old business time. You'd think I'd know something about it by now. A time traveller. A Time Lord. Sailing here and there on the sea of time. Swimming in it, diving s dt. Sometimes almost drowning in it. But I don't know anything about it... time.
MEL	No, I meant it's time I should be going.
DOCTOR	Oh.
MEL	Time I left.
DOCTOR	Yes, you could be right. Time for you to go.
MEL	I just wanted to say...
DOCTOR	Funny old business time.
MEL	Doctor, I...
DOCTOR	Yes, well if you must go, you must go.
MEL	Before I go, I just wanted to say...
DOCTOR	No point, Mel. No point in hanging about. Wasting time.
MEL	No, before I go I wanted to say my piece...
DOCTOR	No, Mel. You wanted to say 'What a strange and exciting journey', I know, Mel. Quite right! Goodbye, Mel.
MEL	Aren't you going to at least let me say it?
DOCTOR	No, Mel
MEL	Why?
DOCTOR	No time.
MEL	Alright, you win.

DOCTOR I do? I usually do.

MEL Oh, shut up!

DOCTOR In the end. Given enough time.

MEL Leave me alone. I'm going. It's over. I've already gone.

DOCTOR Yes, right. You have already gone. You've been gone for ages. You're still here.

MEL Not for long

DOCTOR But you've only just arrived. I haven't even met you yet.

MEL Goodbye!

DOCTOR Oh it all depends on how you look at it and who you are. Funny business time. I remember one time when you laughed. Do you remember, Mel?

MEL Not many laughs with you. Not much fun at all.

DOCTOR Another time you cried.

MEL I never cried

DOCTOR Do you remember, Mel?

MEL I never cried.

DOCTOR You're crying now.

MEL I'm sorry.

DOCTOR I'm sorry too, Mel. Think about me when you're living your life, day after day, all in a neat pattern. Think of the old man in his old phone box. His days like crazy paving.

MEL I think I'd better be going.

DOCTOR Going? But you've only just arrived.

MEL I must.

DOCTOR Must you?

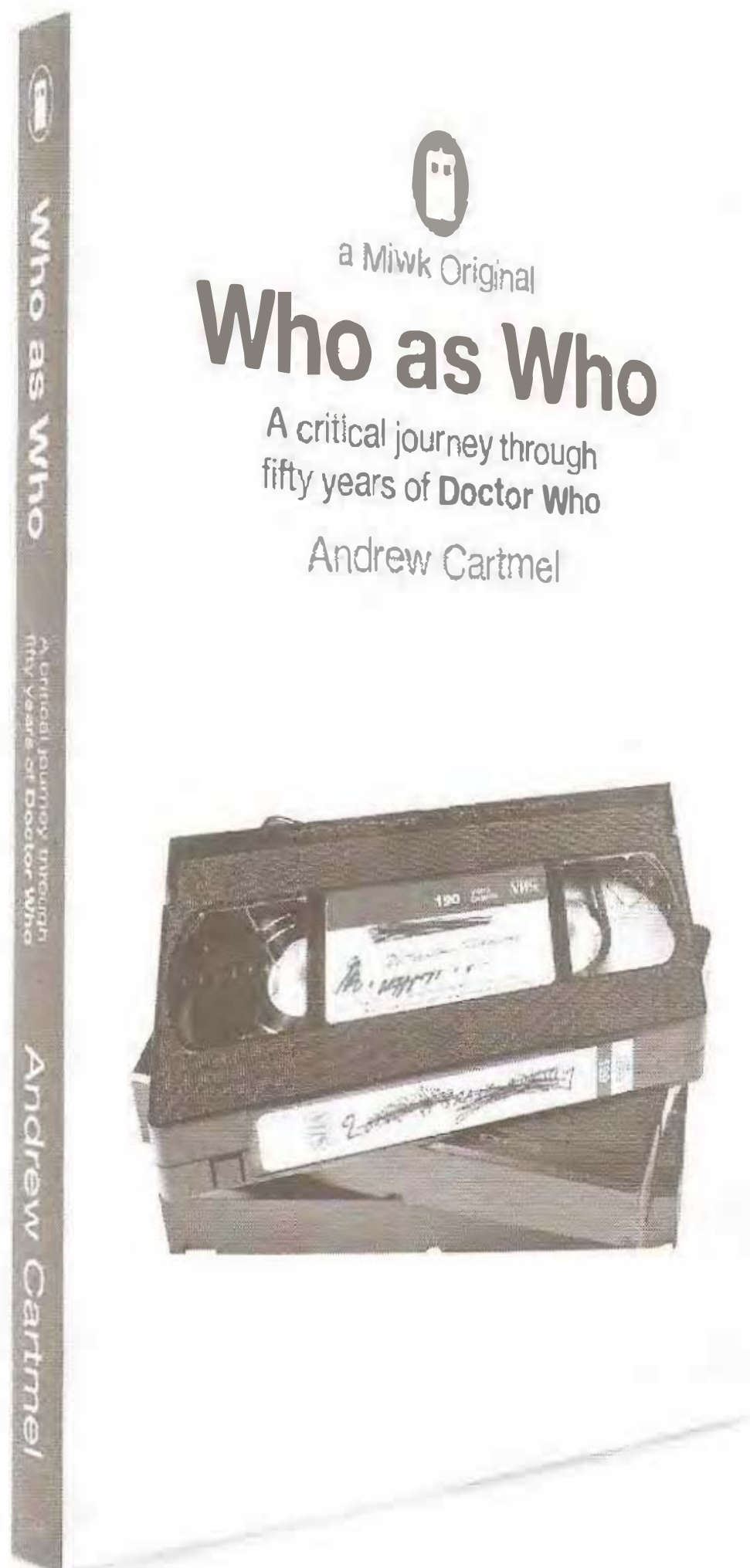
MEL It's time.

DOCTOR I suppose it is.

MEL Funny business time.

FROM THE SAME AUTHOR

Through Time has regenerated!



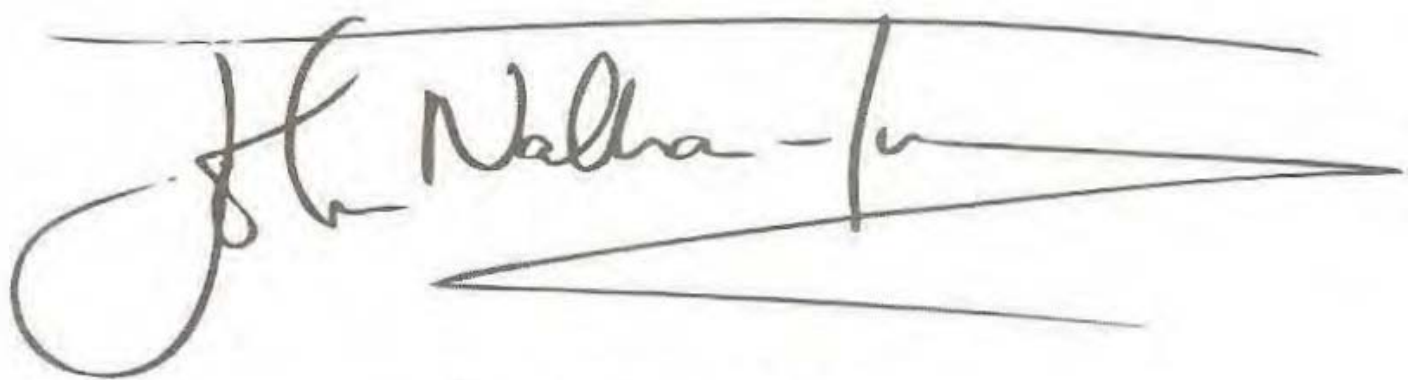
In 2014 **Miwk Publishing** will be reprinting a rewritten, revised and expanded edition of Andrew Cartmel's critical analysis of **Doctor Who**.

For updates, please sign up to our **Facebook** page or follow us on **Twitter**.

FOR MORE ON THIS PERIOD OF DOCTOR WHO PRODUCTION

JN-T

THE LIFE & SCANDALOUS TIMES OF

A stylized, handwritten signature of John Nathan-Turner, rendered in a dark, sketchy line. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style, with the first name 'John' being particularly prominent and the last name 'Turner' being more compact and integrated into the overall flow.

by Richard Marson

For more than a decade, John Nathan-Turner, or 'JN-T' as he was often known, was in charge of every major artistic and practical decision affecting the world's longest-running science fiction programme, **Doctor Who**. Richard

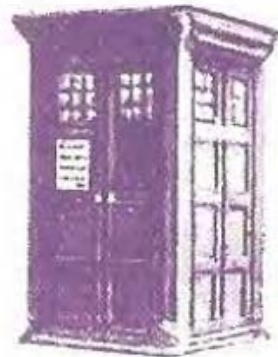
Marson brings his dramatic, farcical, sometimes scandalous and often moving story to life with the benefit of his own inside knowledge and the fruits of over 100 revealing interviews with key friends and colleagues, those John loved and those from whom he became estranged. The author has also had access to all of Nathan-Turner's surviving archive of paperwork and photos, many of which appear here for the very first time.

"Extraordinary. A great piece of work. I read it in two days' flat, I couldn't stop.

I've never seen a biographer enter the story like that, it was brilliant and invigorating. It really is a major piece of **Doctor Who** history and the history of an entire industry. An entire age, really. In the end, I think the book is clear - we have to forgive JN-T. That ending - he didn't deserve that. And I think by writing about it, you have made something elegant and even beautiful out of such a wretched mess. And I think that's very kind of you indeed. This book says a lot about JN-T but it says a lot about your good and kind heart too."

Russell T. Davies (Writer/Producer)

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WITH COMPLIMENTS

"There are worlds out there where the sky is burning, and the sea's asleep, and the rivers dream. People made of smoke, and cities made of song. Somewhere there's danger, somewhere there's injustice, and somewhere else the tea's getting cold. Come on, Ace — we've got work to do!"

Andrew Cartmel was the script editor on **Doctor Who** from 1986 to 1989. During his time on the show he introduced the seventh Doctor and his companion Ace (Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred) and oversaw forty-two scripts written by eight writers new to the series.

With a clear mission to bring proper science fiction back into **Doctor Who**, he formulated what was later termed 'The Cartmel Masterplan', re-introducing the mystery to the character of the Doctor as the series celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary and beyond.

Script Doctor is his memoir of this time based on his diaries written sometimes on set and sometimes not even in the diary itself but on the back of scripts. With a foreword from Sylvester McCoy and an afterword from Sophie Aldred, this book is illustrated with 32 pages of photographs, many never published before. It is a vivid account of life in the **Doctor Who** production office in the late eighties.



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