Toivhwoodblazes back... still chasing aliens, but it's evolved. *RT* saw this week's five-hour BBC1 miniseries taking shape. ▶

**Burning bright**

*Torchwood* blazes back... still chasing aliens, but it's evolved. *RT* saw this week's five-hour BBC1 miniseries taking shape. ▶
FRI 8 AUGUST 2008

In a soulless conference suite in a Cardiff hotel, some 65 members of the Torchwood team have gathered for the reading of the first three (of five) episodes of the new third series. The cast occupies an extensive central table, headed by creator/lead writer Russell T Davies and executive producer Julie Gardner. Seated outside them are Davie’s and executive producer Julie balances and anyone with a vested interest, including RT.

John Barrowman (Captain Jack) arrives, bounces around the room to see how it reads, and if you don’t energy is incredible. Russell and the other writers are there specifically for read-throughs, the but I find read-throughs horrific! I’m a very nervous person anyway, I’d rather have my teeth done!”

lanto Jones, goes through his pronunciation of Grinstead (as in East Wasterwood with aliens - that begins with chill­ stock-still, to chant chillingly the children around the world standing the same phrase over and over: “We are Earth.

the banner Torchwood: Children of Earth. “If I hadn’t used it in Torchwood, maybe in ten years’ time it would have gone into a brand­ new thriller. But when we thought of the format, I just thought it was time to tell this story. If this went out every week, I’d be worried about the cast: with so many characters to keep tabs on, you could get lost. But when it’s daily, you do follow it. I just thought the scale of it play nicely.

“Torchwood is very much more than a sci­show,” she adds, “but it has set­d elements and it’s exciting to take some­ thing that is often niche and look at how you make it acces­sible to as wide an audience as possible. That’s partly about making it an event.”

Hence airing: Torchwood: Children of Earth across five nights – “event television”, in TV- speak – following successful similar broadcast for BBC1 crime drama Five Days and Criminal Justice.

Which might feel like a step-up – depending on your viewpoint. “I’m going to get a little political and I’ll probably get into trouble for it,” says John Barrowman, “but... we were the most successful show on BBC3, ever! Averaging 1.3 million a week, the viewer drew 2.4 million. We moved to BBC1 because the ratings were so good; the ratings were great again this year, which felt like a natural fit in that 13­week format. And we were getting very good viewer response. Then the possibility of BBC1 came up.

Torchwood: Children of Earth is a damned good series that... I know if this was America, they’d try to keep it going for seven years, doing the whole season every week. And ABC America, who show Torchwood, are furious that we’ve changed the format. But our paymasters. It’s the British audience we make these for. And I don’t think audiences are remotely lost by a change in format.”

Over to Davies: “Part of us thought, ‘We could do another 13 episodes,’ which felt like that, and the second series was better than the first. But why not change it?”

“I know if this was America, they’d try to keep it going for seven years, doing the whole season every week. And ABC America, who show Torchwood, are furious that we’ve changed the format. But our paymasters. It’s the British audience we make these for. And I don’t think audiences are remotely lost by a change in format.”

John Barrowman: “I was late with episode one,” says Davies, “so I wrote a episode two and three, with Davies met for two days, and I wrote episode one and changed everything – so John Fay and James Moran had to change everything! That’s why this is such a damned good series that doesn’t drag!”

“I was late with episode one,” says Davies, “so I wrote a episode two and three, with Davies met for two days, and I wrote episode one and changed everything – so John Fay and James Moran had to change everything! That’s why this is such a damned good series that doesn’t drag!”

1 STORY MEETING (January 2008) John Fay, writer of episode two and four, explains: “Russell [T Davies], creator and writer of episodes one and five knew what he wanted the story to be about – the broad outline – and it was about terrorism.”

The core group of Davies, Julie Gardner (executive producer), Euros Lyn (director), Helen Baxendale (producer), Brian Minchin (script editor) and writers Fay and James Moran (episode three with Davies) met for two days, and they’ve been talking since. “Everyone was chipping in ideas,” says Davies.

2 SCRIPTWRITING (January-August 2008) “I was late with episode one,” says Davies, “so I wrote episodes two and three, with Davies met for two days, and I wrote episode one and changed everything – so John Fay and James Moran had to change everything! That’s why this is such a damned good series that doesn’t drag!”

3 READ-THROUGH EPISODES 1-5 (Aug 2008) “I read the scripts the night before and make notes,” says Davies, “but at the read­through you hear them properly for the first time. It’s also to keep an eye on the actors and the pitch of their performance. It’s the tone.

“We have a big meeting the following day and make changes to the scripts, and keep making them better and better.”

“Also you notice stuff,” adds Moran.

“Like in episode one, lanto says he doesn’t like ice cream – then in the third episode he asks for an ice cream. We’ll change that!”

(The read-through of episodes four and five took place during filming.)

4 FILING (August-November 2008) “The daily routine depends on whether you’re on night or day shift, and whether it’s summer or winter,

5 POST-PRODUCTION (November 2008– January 2009) “In post-production they add the special effects, the music and sound design,” adds Barrowman. “It’s hugely important to get the right team together to do that, and a series there’s really only what they call the kill episode and that’s where you lose your viewers. I’m not saying this because I’m in it, but this is a damned good series that doesn’t drag!”