



CAPT JACK HARKNESS
(Torchwood's immortal leader)
"The reason Jack's not shunning the whole couple thing with Ianto is because he wants to have some kind of connection, and love, which has been lacking. I play him living every moment to the fullest."
JOHN BARROWMAN

IANTO JONES
(General support officer)
"In the first season, I had a few normal, middle-of-the-road lines, which I came out with in a dry, sarcastic tone, and I think the writers developed on that. It's good fun. I get the light relief."
GARETH DAVID-LLOYD

Burning bright

Torchwood blazes back... still chasing aliens, but it's evolved. RT saw this week's five-hour BBC1 miniseries taking shape. ▷



GWEN COOPER
(The team's emotional core)
"Gwen's constantly evolving because every day is different, with a different threat. She has to learn new skills fast. This series she's far more focused. She doesn't ask so many questions. She just does."
EVE MYLES

RHYS WILLIAMS
(Gwen's 'civilian' husband)
"Rhys is the person viewers can relate to, rather than these crazy alien hunters! He's a normal guy who enjoys a pint with his mates, wants the 2.4 children and marriage."
KAI OWEN

TORCHEDWOOD
The gang look resolute, but what on earth do the numbers 456 signify?

Torchwood: Children of Earth
Mon-Fri 9.00pm BBC1, BBC HD

FRIDAY 8 AUGUST, 2008. In a soulless conference suite in a Cardiff hotel, some 65 members of the *Torchwood* team have gathered for the read-through 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 the writers, crew members, marketing/publicity bods and anyone with a vested interest, including RT.

John Barrowman (Captain Jack) arrives, bounces around the room like Tigger and high-fives Eve Myles (Gwen Cooper), who admits to being "almost sick with nerves". "At every read-through I've been to, there's always a nervous atmosphere," she explains. "And at *Torchwood* read-throughs, the energy is incredible. Russell and the other writers are there specifically to see how it reads, and if you don't put in 100 per cent, they'll either cut it or amend it, so you've got to give the script the respect it deserves. I'm a very nervous person anyway, but I find read-throughs horrible! I'd rather have my teeth done!"

Gareth David-Lloyd, who plays Ianto Jones, goes through his scripts beforehand, "looking for any funny words I can't pronounce, or any big speeches, and to get the gist of the stories." During the read-through, he corrects Myles's pronunciation of Grinstead (as in East Grinstead in West Sussex). "And she corrected me back!" he says.

Over the course of the day, as the cast read their lines together for the first time, the project takes its baby-steps into life. What emerges

is an epic, frantic political thriller – with aliens – that begins with children around the world standing stock-still, to chant chillingly the same phrase over and over: "We are coming. We are coming."

Season three has upped sticks from BBC2 to run over five consecutive nights on BBC1 as a serial under the banner *Torchwood: Children of Earth*. "Doing a 'first contact' story was one of those ideas tucked away at the back of my head," says Russell T Davies. "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 size of 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 would play nicely."

Much has changed. Two members

not enough salt in the lasagne."

Bickering briefly concluded, Rhys gets in on the action. "Towards the end, when they're really under the cosh, there's a lot of kicking down doors, jumping through buildings and lots of fights, which were brilliant fun to do," says Owen. Did he need special training to kick down a door? "Actually, it was hanging by a thread. But it looks great."

Running one story over five hours also allows more time for relationships to develop. We meet Jack's daughter, there's more of Ianto's home life, and Gwen and Rhys bicker some more. In between come huge explosions, *Torchwood's* largest set yet – the mysterious Floor 13 – as well as its most impressive alien that's part marionette, part

"Other shows move from BBC3 and 2 to 1, and they don't get cut. So why are we?"

JOHN BARROWMAN

of the *Torchwood* team, Owen and Tosh, were killed off at the end of the previous season. Which leaves Jack, Ianto (now in a settled relationship with Jack) and Gwen.

Gwen's husband Rhys (Kai Owen) has been given a bigger role, becoming an unofficial fourth member of the team. "He brings out the domestic side of Gwen," says Myles. "She goes to work, fights three-headed aliens and saves the world, then she'll come home and argue with him about the washing up, or that there's

prosthetic and part CGI special effects. And Peter Capaldi heads the guest cast as a potentially corrupt government bigwig called Frobisher.

It all adds up to delirium for hardened fans, but what will a BBC1 audience, happily conversant with Earth battling aliens via *Doctor Who*, make of it?

Davies's brainchild, *Torchwood* began as a *Doctor Who* spin-off, pitched as something "dark, wild and

continues Davies. "We invented Captain Jack's daughter, for example. So we thrashed it out and broke it roughly into five days' worth of stories. In hindsight, we could have stayed in that room for five solid weeks and worked out every single detail – but that would have driven me mad!"

2 SCRIPTWRITING (January–August 2008)

"I was late with episode one," says Davies, "so episodes two and three were written before that, and then I wrote episode one and changed

everything – so John Fay and James Moran had to change everything! But that's natural."

Fay adds, "It's hard to say how long each script took to write, because they're never quite finished. But it took about two weeks to write one draft, then you do your next draft and a draft after that."

Davies continues the story: "The first three episodes will be on their seventh draft after the read-through. That keeps going on, for practical reasons – a location falling through, for example. But the first three are

more or less fixed – if you change massive stuff, you break the back of the schedule."

3 READ-THROUGH EPISODES 1–3 (Aug 2008)

"I read the scripts the night before and make notes," says Davies, "but at the read-through 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."

"You also notice stuff," adds Moran. "Like in episode one, Ianto 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 FILMING (August–November 2008)

"The daily routine depends on whether you're on night or day shift and whether it's summer or winter,

sexy". Led by Captain Jack Harkness, an invincible Time Agent who first appeared in *Doctor Who* in 2005, the *Torchwood* team are a secret organisation investigating alien and paranormal threats on Earth. It began on BBC3 and ran over 13 episodes from 2006. Then in 2008, series two moved to BBC2.

"BBC3 was very much about looking at science fiction for a younger audience, being a bit cult-y, I guess," explains Julie Gardner. "BBC2 was about taking the show to the home of acquisitions like *Heroes*, which felt like a natural fit in that 13-week format. And we were getting good viewing figures and a very good audience response. Then the possibility of BBC1 came up."

TORCHWOOD IS VERY much more than a sci-fi show," she adds, "but it has sci-fi elements and it's exciting to take something 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 broadcasts for BBC1 crime dramas *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 opener drew 2.4 million]. We moved to BBC2 because the ratings were so good; the ratings were great again [averaging 3.1 million] and we were beating shows that had been on BBC2 for a long time. The decision was made to go to BBC1 – and then we were cut. From 13 episodes down to five."

"The five episodes, the miniseries as I call it, are incredible – I have no doubt about that – but personally, I felt like we were being punished. Other shows move from BBC3 and 2 to 1, and they don't get cut. So why are we? It felt like every time we moved we had to prove ourselves."

Over to Davies: "Part of us thought, 'We could do another 13 episodes, we've learnt how to do 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 same thing every week. And BBC America, who show *Torchwood*, are furious that we've changed the format. But they're not 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."

Nick Griffiths

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SAVE THE CHILDREN
Jack, Gwen and Ianto (above) investigate what's causing the kids' creepy chanting (right)



Torchwood, from script to screen

1 STORY MEETING (January 2008)

John Fay, writer of episodes 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 fleshing that out."

The core group of Davies, Julie Gardner (executive producer), Euros Lyn (director), Peter Bennett (producer), Brian Minchin (script editor) and writers Fay and James Moran (episode three, with Davies) met for two days.

"Everyone was chipping in ideas,"