

COCKNEY COMPANION

Once,
long
ago,
Jackie
Lane
shared
the
Doctor's
adventures
in time
& space.

By STEVE
ERAMO



An unexpected turn into a TARDIS sent Jackie Lane into the world of *Dr. Who* as companion Dodo Chaplet.

For the Doctor and his companions, over three decades, life aboard the TARDIS wasn't always an adventure. The Time Lord's actions sometimes closed the doors on one companion, while opening the door for another.

The 1966 *Doctor Who* adventure "The Massacre" marked such a brief turning point. The Doctor and his then-current traveling companion, Steven Taylor (Peter Purves), find themselves in the middle of the 16th-century feud between the Catholics and Protestants in France. Again the Time Lord must leave history as is and the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve takes place. Sickened by the Doctor's callous disregard for mankind, an angry Taylor departs the TARDIS. For the first time, the Time Lord finds himself faced with the possibility of continuing his travels *alone*. In a moment of reflection, the Doctor takes the viewing audience into his confidence and explains why he dare not change history for any reason. Suddenly, a young girl rushes into the TARDIS, followed closely by Taylor. A familiar wheezing and grinding noise fills the control room and the TARDIS is in flight, taking along a very surprised Dorthea "Dodo" Chaplet.

Elfin-featured actress Jackie Lane was

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the choice to play Dodo, the newest member of the time-traveling band. The daughter of an immigrant Russian family, Lane was born in New York, and moved to England in 1950. Her introduction to the entertainment industry came at an early age, which helped shape her desire to become an actress. "I never thought of anything else," she recalls. "My father was a theatrical costumer, wigmaker and makeup artist. This meant that I was backstage in theaters from the age of seven; maybe that had something to do with wanting to become an actress!

"I joined the Library Theatre, a repertory company in my hometown of Manchester, as a student when I was 19. In those days, you could qualify to be a member of Actors' Equity, either by being accepted as a student in a theater company, or by going to drama school. I chose the former and, after auditioning, was accepted. As a student, you did everything from scrubbing the stage, props, prompting and making tea, to playing small parts. My first appearance was as Audrey in *As You Like It*, which we did twice a day for five weeks, as it was the Shakespeare on the school syllabus."

Apprentice Actress

After leaving the Library Theatre, Lane went to London and made her television debut in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, followed by parts in such popular British series as *Coronation Street* and *Compact*. Lane also

appeared in several films, including *Men of Sherwood Forest*, *The Gamma People*, *Tickle Me*, *The Sword of Ali Baba* and *Incident at Phantom Hill*.

The most trying part in Lane's acting career wasn't before the camera, but in front of a live audience. "My most difficult role, because of the circumstances, was a one-night appearance at the Garrick Theatre in London's West End. I was understudying the role of Honey in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* when, in typical theatrical style, while at the hairdresser's, I heard that the actress I was understudying was ill and that I was on. I had my hair re-arranged and without any rehearsal, went on. I had only been with the company three weeks and had had only as many rehearsals with the understudy cast. I did, however, love the play and watched it every night, so I got through it well enough—at least the late Ray McAnally and Constance Cummings, who were playing the leads, were very complimentary. The actress recovered by the next night, so that was my only West End appearance.

"Apart from that, I loved playing Pamela Harrington in Peter Shaffer's *Five Finger Exercise* because I loved doing comedy. It's wonderful to hear an audience laugh at something you've said or done," Lane says. "I also enjoyed, while at the Library Theatre, playing Old Ropeen in Brendan Behan's *The Hostage*. It was my one and only character role as a very Irish hag. It was satisfying not

to be recognized by anyone. The director said I reminded him of his granny. A great compliment!"

Cockney Actress

Like many companions, Lane's character in *Doctor Who* stumbles into the TARDIS quite by accident when it appears on Wimbledon Common. On her way home from school, Dodo witnesses a traffic accident and runs into the police box, hoping to summon assistance for an injured young boy. Instead, she first finds the Doctor and then Steven Taylor. Before she realizes what's happening, the Doctor activates the TARDIS and the cockney teenager begins her adventures in time and space.

"During the two years I was at the Library Theatre, we did a new play by writer John Wiles called *Never Had It So Good*. He spent a lot of time at rehearsals, watching me play a cheeky, cockney tomboy—a very nice role. Later, John became the producer of *Doctor Who*, and remembered me when they were looking for a new companion at the end of 1965. We met again and that was it! When the series began back in 1963, I had met with Verity Lambert and Waris Hussein, the first producer and director, when they were casting the Doctor's granddaughter. At that time, I told them I didn't want to be tied down to a series for a year. I didn't say no a second time!"

In creating Dodo, the producers were looking for a new kind of girl companion. Rising British personalities of the time, such as Michael Caine and Twiggy, had made the cockney accent acceptable, so it was decided that Dodo should carry on this trend. It was also felt that Jackie's resemblance to Carole Ann Ford, who played the Doctor's granddaughter Susan, would explain the Doctor's quick affection for this new girl.

Her days on the *Doctor Who* set were long ago, so Lane notes, "I can't remember any specific incidents that took place during the time I was in the series, but I do remember that we had lots of laughs during the rehearsal periods. Studio days were a different matter. That was just hard work and concentration trying to get everything right. Not that we always did. In such a technical show, there were too many gadgets or effects which could go wrong."

Of the six *Doctor Who* episodes on which she worked, Lane points to "The Celestial Toymaker" and "The Savages" as her favorites. "Excellent scripts," she recalls. Unfortunately, only episode four of "The Celestial Toymaker" remains in existence today. The last story that Dodo appeared in was "The War Machines," in which the Doctor took on the seemingly impossible challenge of defeating a highly sophisticated computer bent on world domination. Unfortunately, Dodo never had an on-screen farewell scene with the Doctor. Instead, she gave her goodbyes through the Doctor's two new traveling companions, Ben and Polly.

Looking back on her work on the series, Lane is philosophical. "There was never a chance to change anything about the charac-



Lane Photos: Courtesy Steve Eramo

Now specializing in voiceovers, Lane considers this "the right role" for her.

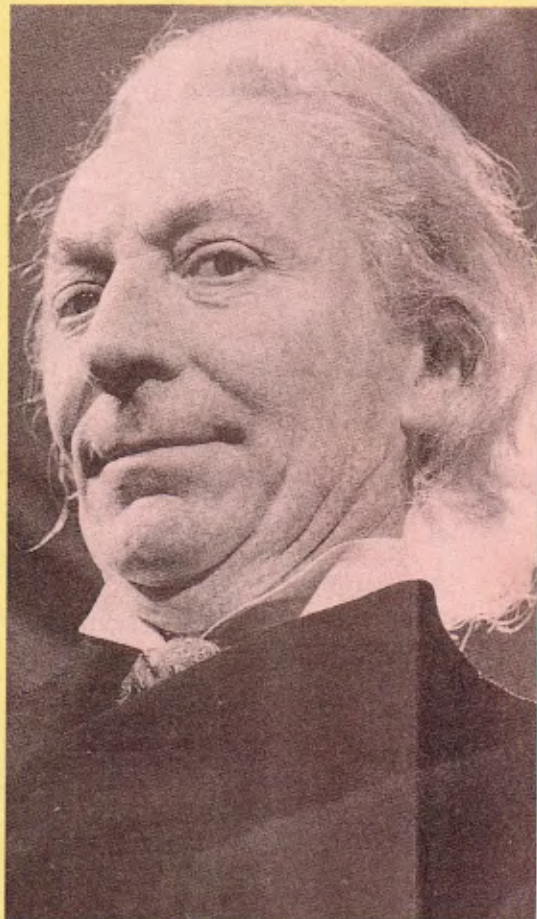
Hartnell/Who Photo: Copyright 1963 BBC

ter. That was how she was written and I didn't have any say," she declares. "What I would have done was pay more attention to the technicalities of television acting. I'm afraid I spent most of my time ignoring the camera—which, looking at old episodes,

"It was satisfying not to be recognized by anyone."

makes the performance rather 'staged'—instead of adapting to suit the medium. I began to do this but, alas, my stay in the series was very brief."

Lane traveled to Paris after she left *Doctor Who*, and spent a year there working at the Australian embassy as the secretary to their Vice Consul. "I came back to England and had an antiques business for several years. During that time, I never lost touch with the profession, and eventually got myself a job as an agent's assistant. Three years later, they asked me if I would specialize in voiceovers, and I agreed. In 1988, I formed Ad Voice and am glad to say that it's going from strength to strength despite the recession. I have always loved people's voices," says Jackie Lane, "so perhaps I have finally found the right role."



William Hartnell's Doctor almost found himself alone until Dodo rushed in.