FERGIE HELPS ELTON
CARING Fergie yesterday threw open the gates of Buckingham Palace to cancer-haunted Elton John. She sent the pop star a round-the-world telegram saying: "Come and get better with us." The Duchess of York and husband Andrew made the offer as Elton, 39, checked into St Vincent's private hospital in Sydney for tests on nodules in his throat. He arrived clutching two souvenir cricket bats from England's last tour of Australia and a child's writing slate to "talk" to people after the op.

Dr WHO'S REAL ENEMY!
Gutless Grade never liked me says actor Colin Baker

NIKEL MANSELL IN MUM BRAWL
Fury of race ace
MOTOR racing ace Nigel Mansell was involved in a furious family brawl that sent his new stepmother sprawling on the floor, it was revealed last night.

Mrs Jane Mansell, 48, who is recovering from a serious operation, suffered internal bruising in the bust-up, and had to see a doctor. She claimed the Grand Prix star grabbed her in the hall of her bungalow and the landed "in a heap." Mansell, 33, was making his first visit there since his father Eric, 60, married Jane last July.

The driver was devoted to his mother Joyce, who died from cancer in 1986, and was bitterly opposed to his father's remarriage.

CHOICE
Mansell stormed out of the house after the row on Sunday, telling his father: "If you want her, I will go out of this door and never come back again.

But last night Eric warned: "If I am asked to make a choice between Jane and Nigel then it will be Jane."

Mansell, the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year, was accompanied by his wife Rosanne, 31, for the unexpected trip to his father's home in Worcestershire.

His stepmother, who had her operation seven weeks ago, claimed Mansell grabbed her with four-letter words. She said: "Nigel must have known about my operation because my husband had told Nigel's wife. "But that did not stop him catching hold of me in the hall. "I went up against the wall, slipped down the radiator and ended up in a heap."

Smiles hide the anguish... Nigel Mansell with wife Rosanne and daughter Chloe

£40,000 SUN BINGO: Today's numbers—Page 16
WHY I’LL NEVER FORGIVE GUTLESS GRADE
BY AXED DR WHO

COWARD WHO CAN’T FACE ME

EXCLUSIVE
By Sue Carroll

DR WHO star Colin Baker today blasts off against the man who sacked him, BBC Controller Michael Grade.

In this sizzling Sun series, he says he knew he would be exterminated because Grade gunned for him from day one.

But he was still flustered when the axe fell, because the high command were clear on the issue.

SLAGGED off Dr Who in public without telling the show, and BACKED out of telling Baker man-to-man to tell him why he was being fired.

EXPIRED millions of loyal Dr Who viewers by calling them 'peasants'.

ACTED like a stern headmaster and treated grown men like schoolboys.

ORDERED Baker’s boss to persuade him to stay even though he had been fired, but had resigned.

TRIED to make him look foolish by asking him to come back for four episodes—just to be killed off.

Colin Baker will never forget the day the bombshell dropped—by phone.

"Do you want the good news or the bad news?" asked the Dr Who producer on the line.

"The good news is that Grade wants the show to go on.

"The bad is that he wants to do it without you."

Colin, 43, and under the impression that he was contracted to the series for at least one more year, felt guilty about his departure from his voice.

He says: "I couldn’t quite take it in, it was such a shock. I’d fought so hard for the show, I was stunned.

"What I couldn’t accept was that Grade didn’t have the guts to tell me-man-to-man.

EXCUSES
"If I knew why I was sacked then I would feel better about it all.

"But I got dubbed off with excuses about Grade thinking that three years as Dr Who was long enough.

"The fact is, I only made 18 episodes before he cancelled the show.

"When it started again last year there were only 14 episodes. Hardly a long run, is it?

I was so busy with a proper explanation, I was too much of a gentleman to believe, so I did, that I had been fired publicly.

"Of course, if you should see it coming when I first got the part back in 1983.

"Michael Grade landed the job as controller just after I joined, and made his feelings about Dr Who very clear.

"He confirmed this one afternoon when he called me in the lobby at the BBC, in full costume, and there was no escape.

"But there was not a flicker of recognition on his face. He just stopped straight past, without a flicker.

In our dressing room, Grade talked about the atmosphere at the BBC:

"That’s the sort of attitude Grade has introduced to the BBC.

"Instead of being a friendly organisation, it has turned into a very cold and business-like institution.

"In the old days, controllers like Bill Cotton, would have a word for everyone.

"Grade—nowadays, the atmosphere at the BBC is very sinister. Everyone is very guarded and there is a lot of dark whispering.

"I’m sure Grade would want me to keep quiet about all of this, but the fact is that there are a lot of disaffected actors around.

"He didn’t even want me to say anything. He had been fired.

"I don’t think Grade had a boss like Jonathan Powell, the head of series and classics. But he said that the BBC would stand by any statement.

"He strongly suggested to me that I should be leaving for personal reasons.

"But the worst thing of all was they actually asked me to come back and do four more episodes, just so that I could be killed off and fit in with their plans.

TRAGIC
"I told them what they could do with their offer.

"Until his bombshell landing, Grade was looking sweet for Baker.

"His price was as Dr Who who had helped them more than £100,000 home in the country.

"And the birth of daughter Lucy, had brought comfort to Grade and wife Marion after the tragic death of their eldest son.

"Grade is a rich man from Dr Who and Big Finish companies who bought the show.

"I’m sure Grade would want me to keep quiet about all of this, but the fact is that there are a lot of disaffected actors around.

"He didn’t even want me to say anything. He had been fired.

"I don’t think Grade had a boss like Jonathan Powell, the head of series and classics. But he said that the BBC would stand by any statement.

"He strongly suggested to me that I should be leaving for personal reasons.

"But the worst thing of all was they actually asked me to come back and do four more episodes, just so that I could be killed off and fit in with their plans.

"When I told them, they were shocked and I was convinced that I was a good Dr Who. ButGrade certainly isn’t an equal for me as my predecessors.

"I would have liked to carry on being Dr Who for another 10 years, and I believe that’s what should have happened.

"Instead the show was moved around, cancelled, cut down, and returned with Grade, the very man who should have been backing me.

Colin Baker in his Dr Who costume... when Grade saw him in it he walked past without a word

Gradually Dr Who and his Tardis for a year, then brought it back—cut from 26 episodes a year to just 14.

SLUMP
The team, says Colin, were pleased with the series, titled Trial Of A Time Lord, but despondent that the show was cancelled immediately after Roland Salt and before news, when people are not actually glued to the box.

"There was no encouragement from Grade," says Colin. "He never visited the set once.

"It doesn’t take a genius to see that they brought the show back, just to kill it off.

"How could they expect viewing figures to rise when it was slotted in at such a bad time?"

By the end of the last series, the audience had dropped to five million.

But Colin says: "Every producer John Nathan-Turner, a great friend, and one of my allies, was fed up. He didn’t want to do another series. In seven years he had had enough, but they made him do it.

"Even so, five million viewers isn’t so bad. The Wogan show doesn’t do much better than that, but you must find Grade moaning about a show that’s his brainchild.

"It’s terrible to hear the way he talks about Dr Who. On one radio show he dismissed the fans of the show as ‘frogs.’"

SLAMMED
"And when a former Dr Who, Patrick Troughton, slammed the decision to cancel the show, Grade had one answer. ‘Actors should stick to acting’

"Well in that case, controllers should stick to controlling and not pop up on the box all the time. Maybe if they did, they’d be better at their jobs.

TOMORROW:
Losing my job could hit Cot Death cash