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ON SET
IN ROME

ROMAN HOLIDAY

So the Tardis lands in Pompeii AD 79 just before the eruption of Vesuvius...
Non c'è problema! The Doctor Who film crew makes a flying visit to Italy

I've a feeling we're not in Cardiff any more," says David Tennant, as a make-up artist sprays him with insect repellent. Opposite us, a Roman soldier is fanning himself with a newspaper. It's 28°C here in Rome. "Apparently, it's raining back home," Tennant grins. "Shame!"

It's September 2007 and *Doctor Who* is on location at Italy's Cinecittà Studios, where the BBC/HBO series

Rome was filmed. Tennant, co-star Catherine Tate and 40-odd crew from BBC Wales have special permission to film on the five acres of outdoor sets – a detailed reconstruction of Ancient Rome – for an episode set in Pompeii in AD 79. This is the first time that the revived series has taken the cast abroad for filming.

"We only have two days here," says director Colin Teague, "so we have to

make the most of it. We finished in Cardiff last week, loaded the Tardis onto a truck, and this big juggernaut travelled across Europe. It's like a military operation." Another issue is the language. "We've an Italian third assistant director who's been helping us communicate with the extras."

"I'm Mount Vesuvius," announces Gareth Williams, the Welsh first assistant. He's standing on a box and

waving his arms about. Slaves, soldiers and stallholders stare blankly back at him. "Smoke is billowing out of me. The ground is shaking." This is duly translated into Italian, prompting smiles and nods. This time, the supporting artists throw themselves about the cobbled street like pros, grabbing small children, toppling urns and running for cover under doorways. "Look at me, not

the camera! No smiling, please!"

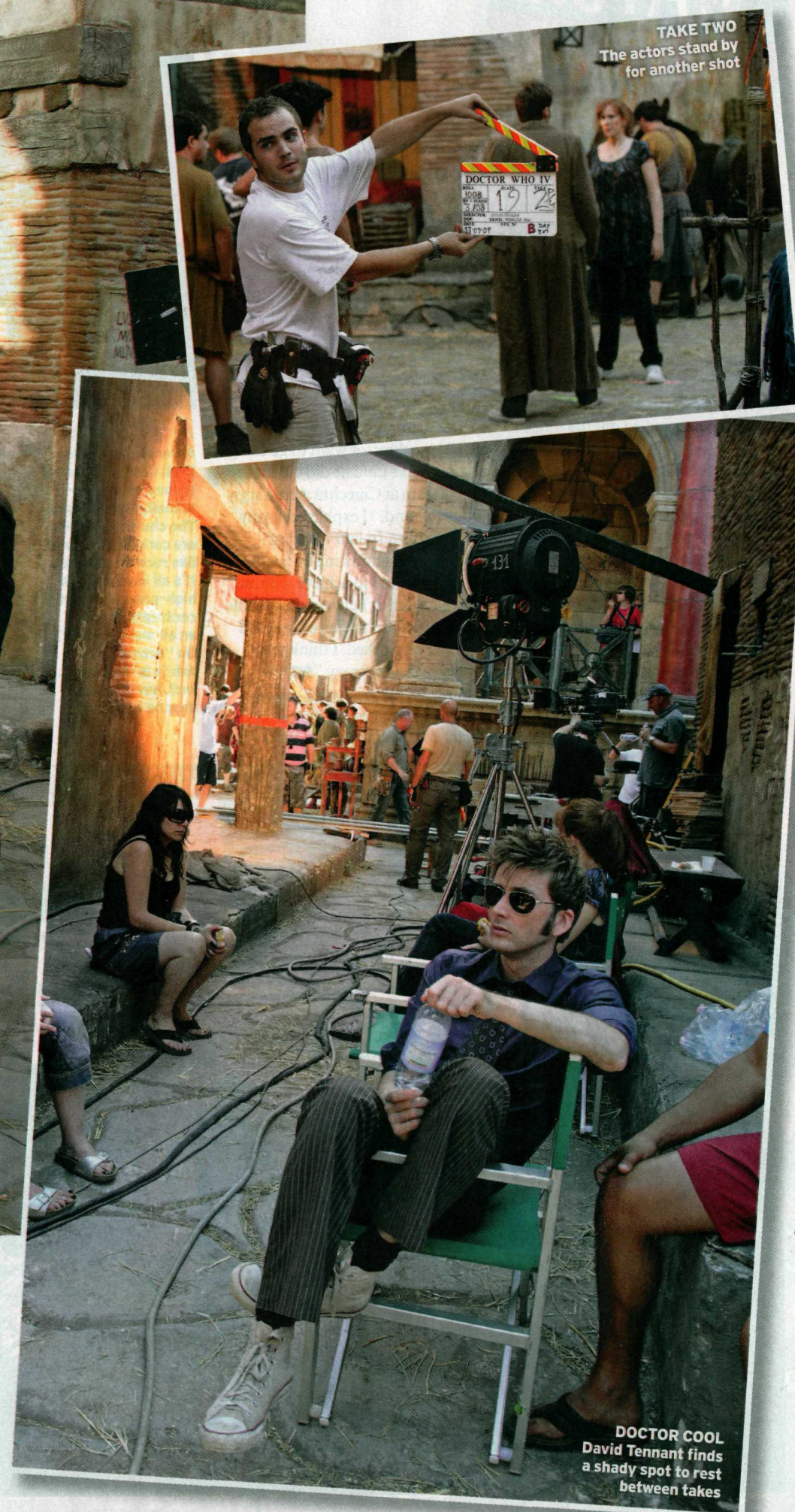
It wasn't until writer James Moran delivered the script that the team realised they'd have to shoot both day and night scenes in Rome. "Tonight, we've got our big effects shot," says Teague, "which is everything showering down on Pompeii."

Nightfall at Cinecittà, and ash falls from the sky, courtesy of special effects company Any Effects, as ▷

VOLCANO DAY
On the Ancient Rome set at Cinecittà Studios, director Colin Teague (in the cricket hat) talks David Tennant and Catherine Tate through the Doctor and Donna's arrival in Pompeii

DRAMA | DOCTOR WHO Saturdays BBC1
DOCTOR WHO CONFIDENTIAL Saturdays BBC3

TAKE TWO
The actors stand by for another shot



DOCTOR COOL
David Tennant finds a shady spot to rest between takes

Re-creating the eruption of Vesuvius ▶

DOCTOR WHO WATCH EXCLUSIVE

Supporting artists flee in panic. This had to be filmed at night, because that's how dark it became in Pompeii as clouds of ash blotted out the light. Phil Cornwell (of *Dead Ringers* fame) plays a Pompeian stallholder: "Once this stuff gets in, you can't get it out," he says, picking ash from his hair after a take. "I'm having a bad hair day."

Teague watches it back on the camera monitor. "That's great! Catherine and David running down the street, and Phil looking up, seeing the horror of it, and it's all going mad. He really pulled out the emotion. It looks like this is the end. For him, the holocaust is coming."

In a quieter moment, sitting on some steps opposite Cinecittà's replica Forum (which will be digitally replaced with Mount Vesuvius in post-production), Tennant reflects, "It must have been horrific when that mountain erupted. Those poor people. They really must have thought it was the end of the world. It's important not to forget that, and really that's what this episode is about." **Benjamin Cook**

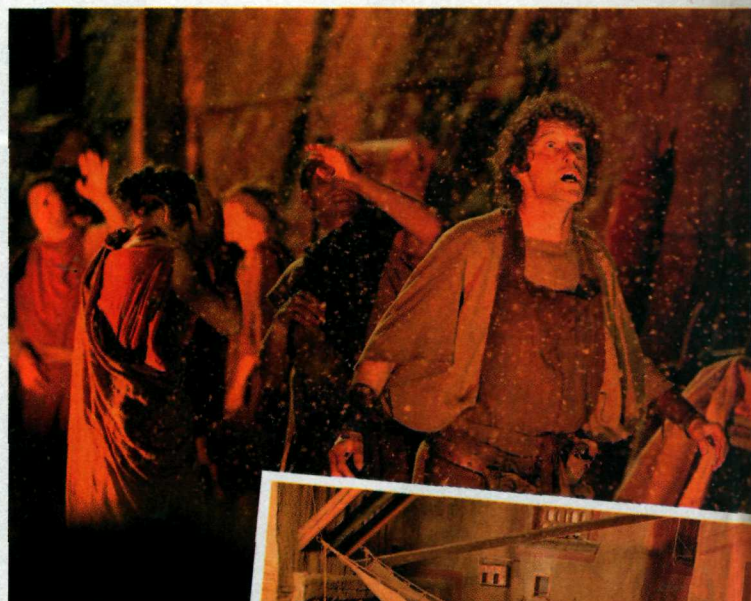
THE ERUPTION

How Pompeii's final hours were captured on film

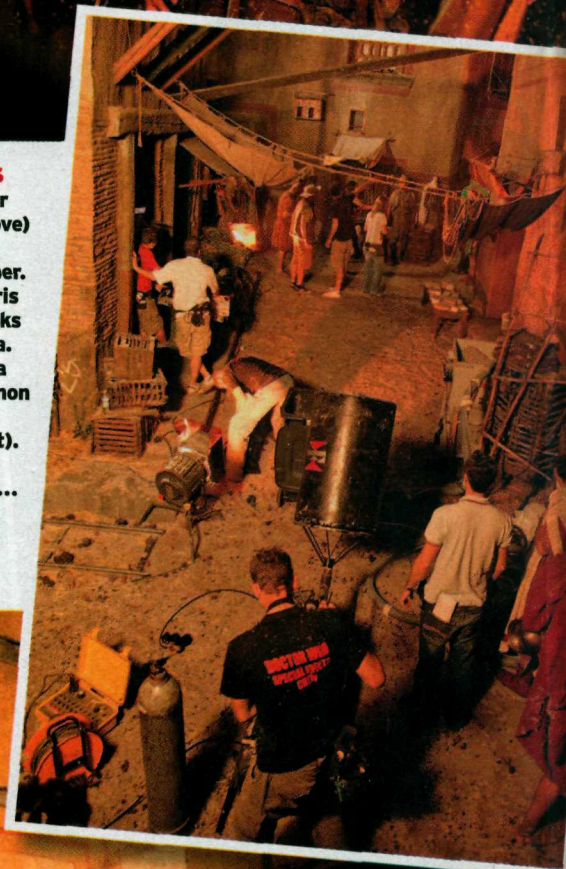
"We were stepping onto a multimillion-pound set," says Any Effects' Danny Hargreaves, "so a lot of work went into persuading Cinecittà to let us create such a mess. Part of the condition was that we'd help tidy up! It was only courtesy."

When the cameras rolled, Danny and his team had to keep "a constant supply of debris raining down", and be poised to reset within minutes should the director want to go for a second take (and he did). But the effects team at Cinecittà were happy to lend a hand. "I explained, in my worst, broken Italian – a lot of pointing and scratching of heads – what we wanted to achieve in these scenes, and their help was invaluable. But they couldn't believe the speed at which we worked. I think they thought we were crazy." **BC**

There's also full behind-the-scenes coverage of the Cinecittà shoot in *Doctor Who Magazine*, out 1 May.



ASHES TO ASHES
A Pompeian trader (Phil Cornwell, above) is covered in ash – actually tissue paper. The chunks of debris are cork, which looks like rock on camera. It's all loaded into a high-pressure cannon contraption called an air woofer (right). On "action", the debris is fired over... well, anything and anyone in its path!



FIRE!
Five weeks before filming, a fire destroyed around 32,000 sq ft of the Cinecittà lot. Fortunately, most of the areas designated for *Doctor Who* were relatively unscathed

THE ACTOR: PETER CAPALDI

Fantasy becomes reality for a childhood fan

"Everybody apparently comes on the show and says they're great fans of it. And usually it's just a lie," laughs Peter Capaldi. "But in my case it's actually true." Capaldi grew up in Glasgow and watched *Doctor Who* since its earliest days with William Hartnell back in the 60s. "I'm a geek, you see," he admits. "I was devoted to *Doctor Who*. So I'm thrilled to be in it. I didn't even read the script. I just said yes."

So addicted was he that he'd write to the cast as a child and one day received back "this huge package," he recalls. "It was a pile of scripts of *Doctor Who*, from *The Mutants* [a 1972 Jon Pertwee six-parter]. I'd never even seen a script; I had no idea how all this worked. You can imagine how exciting that was. I've still got them. They're on my bookshelf."

So stepping onto the set of new *Doctor Who* must have been particularly exciting? "It was really quite moving, actually. I asked David Tennant where the Tardis was, and he said, 'I'll show you.' It was covered in drapes because they hadn't finished dressing it. And I pulled the drapes back and there it was. It's such a part of your childhood and you've survived – I'm nearly 50 – so to have a bit of your childhood still there, and the real thing, was very moving."

Capaldi plays marble merchant Caecilius, into whose family home the Doctor and Donna are drawn. Asked for a most memorable moment during filming, he says, "Being out on a mountainside with the Tardis, the Doctor and Catherine Tate. In the rain. In the middle of the night. In this very exposed, real environment. Quite magical."

Some of the cast filmed scenes on location in Rome. Is that where he was? "No. Merthyr Tydfil." **Nick Griffiths**

DOCTOR WHO
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EXCLUSIVE**



THE WRITER: JAMES MORAN

Writing for your hero should be easy – but is it?

It may come as some surprise that the people of Pompeii had no word in their vocabulary for "volcano".

James Moran, writer of *The Fires of Pompeii*, explains, "There had been a big earthquake about 17 years before the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 and ever since, there had been lots of tremors, which they thought were the gods rumbling or shouting. They'd make an offering to the household gods every time there was a tremor. They just didn't know."

"If it happened now, I would think the world was ending. Back then, having no idea what a volcano was, and with their superstitions and beliefs, it must have been absolutely terrifying. They must have thought the gods had come down to rip the place to pieces."

The Doctor and Donna arrive in Pompeii shortly before Vesuvius blows, leading to a horrible moral dilemma: does he warn the people, thus altering the course of history, or does he do nothing?

Naturally, the Time Lord's human companion will have plenty to say, and Moran reveals that, had it not been Catherine Tate's Donna, the responsibility would have fallen to an all-new character: "When I first got the job,

they didn't know Catherine Tate was coming back, so they were trying to come up with a new companion called Penny. But they kept saying, 'We really loved it when Donna was in the Tardis, and that relationship,' so it was obvious they wanted to move it in a different direction; more of an adult friend than a wide-eyed younger girl."

Moran, who also scripted the archly wonderful horror film

Severance and a recent episode of *Torchwood*, happens to have been a huge *Who* fan since childhood, which he imagined would make getting into the Doctor's head rather easy. *Au contraire*. "It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to write. They say that upfront: 'It's the hardest show to write for.' I thought, 'For everyone else, maybe; I think you'll find that I won't have any trouble!'"

Some 20 deleted versions of David Tennant's opening line later, he admits, "I went mad for a while: over 40 years of history... eight million people watching every week... the ten-year-old version of myself watching as well... I thought, 'Am I going to have to phone them up and say: I really appreciate this, but you'll have to find someone else, because I can't cope!'"

He didn't, happily, as you will see. Indeed, James Moran came up with something rather explosive... **NG**

LINKS Read more about the Doctor's adventures in Earth's past at www.radiotimes.com/doctor-who-in-history



FEELING THE HEAT

Time is running out for the Doctor (David Tennant) and Donna (Catherine Tate) and the people of Pompeii – but should the time travellers warn them?

