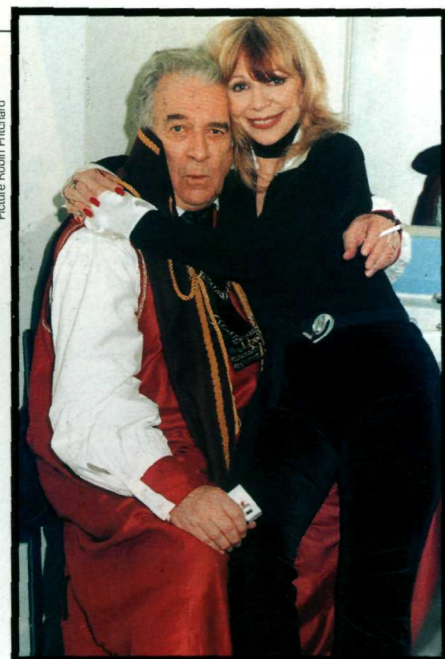


ELECTRIC WHO

He was used to crying, "Five rounds, rapid!" She took all her clothes off for a girlie magazine. Stephen O'Brien time-travels back to an age when Jon Pertwee was Doctor Who and Katy Manning and Nicholas Courtney helped protect Earth from alien invasions.



Katy Manning and Nicholas Courtney get reacquainted.

"Cor!" says Nicholas Courtney, aka Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart from *Doctor Who*. He's describing his first impression of Katy Manning: "I remember saying, 'I'm glad she's joined the show!'" "I was exactly the same!" she replies, remembering her co-star from when he was young and had a full head of hair. "I thought, 'I'll 'ave some of that!'"

Manning joined *Doctor Who* in 1971 as the scatty and pixie-like Jo Grant, joining Jon Pertwee and the crack fighting force UNIT during what was probably the show's most popular period.

Together again

The two of them were recently reunited on the set of *Lust In Space*, an independently produced video putting *Doctor Who* on trial for sexism of the strongest order. A long spell in LA has only heightened Manning's natural

effervescence and Nick Courtney, tired and worn out after a long day's filming, is finding it difficult to keep up.

"I rang Nick when I got back and I said to him, 'You can tell I've decided I'm coming home because I'm calling you!'" Manning enthuses. "Apart from my direct family, like my daughter and my mother, Nick was the first person I rang. I needed to see my Nick."

Dumbed down

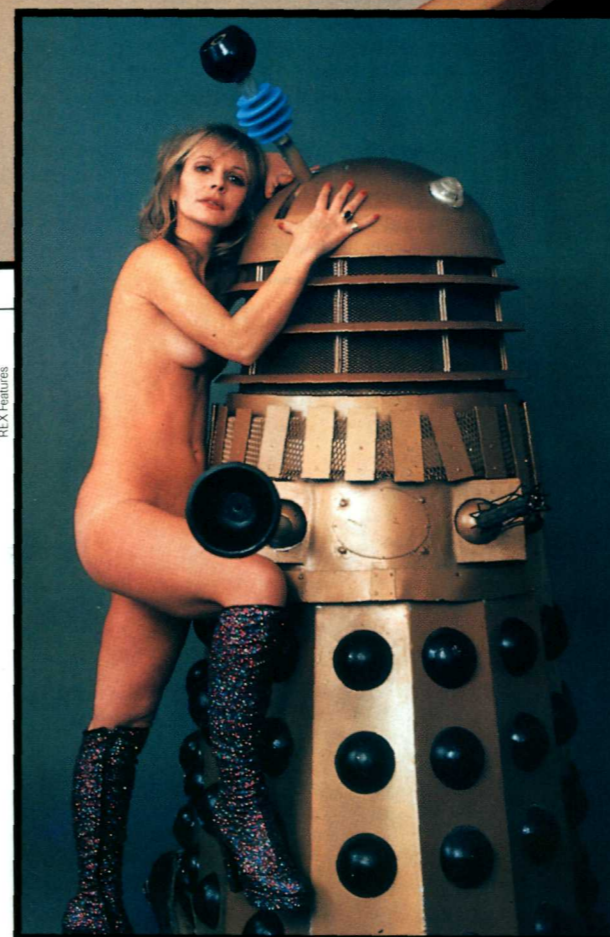
Manning joined the programme after it had experimented with employing Liz Shaw, a companion on an intellectual par with the Doctor. Jo, on the other hand, was a companion in the conventional mould, all twisted ankles and tea-making skills.

"In my first episode the Doctor says, 'I thought you had a science degree', and she says, 'I never said I passed!'" Manning grins. "I think what Jo brought was that she didn't have any academia but – boy! – was she a loyal little soul. She would give up her life for the Doctor,



Katy Manning, more than happy to talk with her clothes on.

Picture Craig Sternett



Manning discovers the easiest way to defeat the daleks is to titillate them.

the Brig, anybody! That was what was so nice about her. She was always ready to run in and say, 'I don't know what I'm doing but if you're going to hurt anybody, make it me!' That's one thing Jo and I have in common – our loyalty."

"Absolutely!" Courtney bellows suddenly, warming to the theme. "There was one time when the Doctor was going to be killed by this huge Azal thing and Katy shouted, 'No, me first, kill me first!'"

And if Manning had been the companion instead of Jo Grant?

"I'd have said, 'Take the Doctor!'" the actress laughs.

A new face

When Manning joined the show, most of the cast were already

well-established but despite this, they all made a concerted effort to welcome the new girl and make her a part of the team.

"They were absolutely amazing! Fabulous!" she recalls. "You see, I was this demented, naïve person who came into their lives very unexpectedly because I hadn't been queuing up for auditions. It was very sudden wasn't it, darling?"

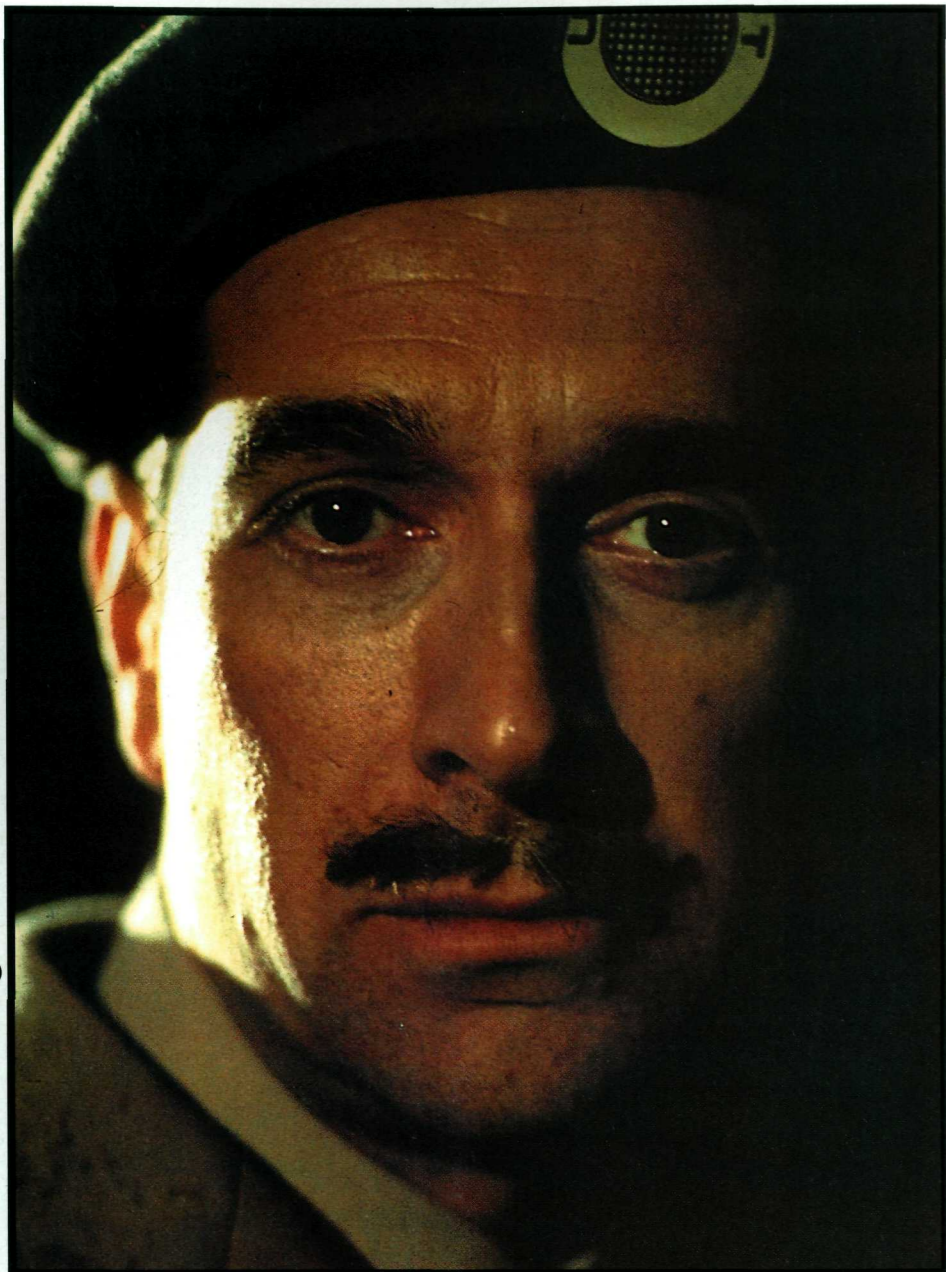
Courtney nods in agreement.

"I put her straight on my knee and fondled her!" he responds.

"And we've done the same ever since!" Manning guffaws, dirtily.

Fondling friends

"We were a very touchy little team" she says naughtily. "We never really stopped laughing and giggling. We were a great team because we cared about everything – not just the day-to-day work, but everything. They were my friends in the show, but they were also people I loved dearly outside the show."



The Brigadier looks back wistfully on the days before enemies of the state boasted tentacles and superior firepower.

We were always in these awful conditions in freezing cold quarry pits having a fabulous time. We would all keep each other warm and tell each other stories!"

"Dear Benton..." Courtney chimes in with a wistful air, remembering his loyal Sergeant from the era.

"Ah, the Boy! The Boy!" she responds, rather bemusingly.

"We were a family," says Courtney.

"We were all very different actually," Manning remarks. "But it was like the magic ingredients."

Did the UNIT team socialise much off-set?

"I'd lead them astray to the pub. We socialised a lot," Courtney grins.

Stripping off

In the mid-70s, Manning managed to both shock and delight the nation when she stripped off for a well-publicised photo shoot with an ill-advised pair of spangly knee boots and a sexually excited Dalek. What was Nick Courtney's first reaction?

"Cor!"

"I think my somewhat twisted sense of

humour might have slightly backfired on me." Manning confesses, "It seemed like a really funny idea at the time. I'll be honest with you though – they were never meant to come out. I was in this play the night it was all exposed playing this nice Jewish girl who'd got pregnant—"

"—Pregnant by the Dalek!" Courtney interjects, laughing.

Trembling hands

"You remember Bill Grundy?" Manning says, referring to the infamous TV host sacked from the *Today* programme in 1976 for inciting the Sex Pistols on a cosy ITV teatime show. "He was a notorious woman-hater. He came up to me and said, 'I believe you take your clothes off in the show tonight.'"

"I said, 'It's a bit hard to get pregnant in a boiler suit', and as I lit my cigarette – somewhat nervously because I'd heard Bill was going to be a complete arsehole to me – [Manning pauses, her hands trembling in demonstration mode] – and I set fire to this tissue. I thought, well, the camera's not on me and I'm not talking, so I tried to put this tissue out which I instantly dropped on the floor, and as I sat up on this really badly-made Swedish chair I keeled over and ended up with my head right in his crotch!"

Was Courtney ever offered a similar genital-exposing photo shoot?

"Not really, no." He responds, perhaps only now contemplating the lost possibilities.

"I think you should have been on the other side of the Dalek!" Manning chimes in, cheekily.

"Yes, I should have been!"

Moving on

Manning left *Who* in 1973 after three seasons, heading off into the sunset with long-haired eco-hippy Professor Cliff Jones. Why then?



The Brigadier pretends to be interested in one of the Doctor's scientific theories while secretly thinking about killing aliens.



"You're not the Master!" cried the Doctor. "You're Old Man Jenkins from the abandoned mine!"

"It was time," she says simply. "It was also only my second job in the business. When you're doing a show like *Doctor Who* you've got to have new things all the time. It's easier to do it with the girl than with anybody else. You can't keep changing the Doctor and of course the Brig was absolutely established. It was time – three years is really about it."

A Farewell to Arms

When Tom Baker and a new production team came on board, *Who's* Earth-bound nature was gradually phased out, meaning UNIT and the Brigadier were no longer needed.

"I think it was missed," Manning argues.

"In retrospect, it didn't matter that I went away for a little bit out of the programme. It gave me a chance to get back into the theatre," says Courtney in turn.

With *Who's* 20th anniversary in 1983 came 'The Five Doctors', an ambitiously staged

"AS I SAT ON THIS BADLY MADE SWEDISH CHAIR I KEELED OVER AND ENDED UP WITH MY HEAD IN HIS CROTCH!"

reunion of most of the ex-Doctors and companions. Notably absent by Jon Pertwee's side was Manning.

"I was working," she shrugs. "Treading the boards on the other side of the world. I would have come back but I really couldn't leave what I was doing."

Doing the rounds

Now Manning is becoming a British resident again, she seems keen to do the fan convention circuit, even if it's in small doses.

"When I do them, I want them to be worth doing," she argues. "I know you don't believe it, but I'm really terribly shy. There's a side of me which Nick knows about, but it's not what you see. Who would want to see me if I was constantly dull and boring and monosyllabic?"



Jo wonders if now is the time to scream loudly – it's not the monsters who frighten her, but the hideous incidental music.

You have to have a persona to go out and do that otherwise people are going to fall asleep. It's work and you've got to treat it as that.

"Now I'm back here I'd like to do a few because of all the people that have been so supportive of the show. I know it was recently voted as one of the top ten best television programmes ever in some paper. I'd just like to put a little bit back."

Moving with the times

What would Jo be doing now?

"It's a bit of a worry, isn't it, darling!" Manning says, laughing as only hardened smokers can. "She'd of probably have found lots to do with animals and things."

And what's the Brig up to now?

"He's writing his memoirs at the moment,"

Courtney nods sagely, with a subtlety not unknown to major Hollywood stars. "We thought the title was going to be *Five Rounds Rapid*, but my wife's come up with a better title..." He suddenly goes silent, refusing to elaborate further.

And what is Manning going to be up to now she's back in Blighty?

"I'm going to be reading Nick's book!" she says, enthusiastically. "And then I'm going to serialise it on the radio!"

The Jon Pertwee-era of *Doctor Who* isn't currently showing on UK television. Selected videos, such as 'The Green Death' Collector's Edition and 'Frontier in Space' are, however, available. Turn to page 87 if you have trouble finding them.