



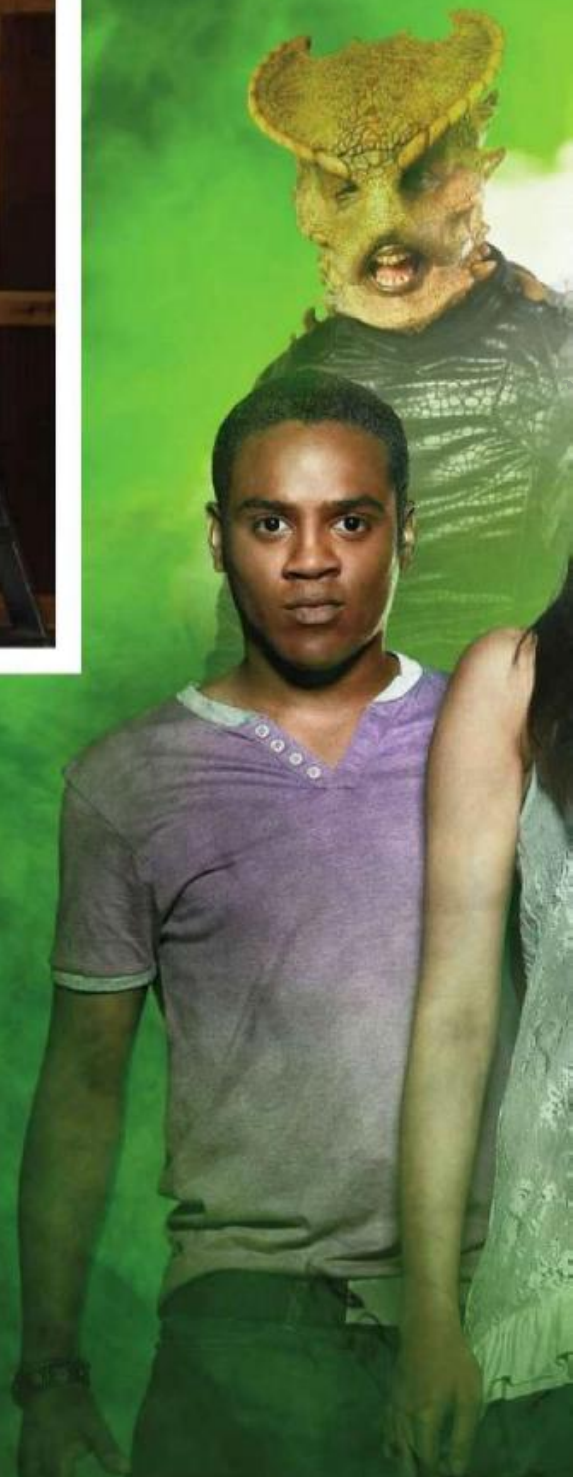
Lis and Katy pose together, on the day of the read-through.

The date is 19 April 2010, and Britain is under a cloud – a cloud of volcanic ash, drifting in from Iceland. Remember that? It's all brightness and light at Upper Boat studios, home of *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, though, and much of it's radiating from two much-loved *Doctor Who* actresses. *SFX* is here for a read-through of a script which not only sees Sarah Jane (Lis Sladen) meet Matt Smith's Doctor but, just as excitingly, sees the return of Jon Pertwee-era companion Jo Grant to our screens after a 37-year gap. As Katy Manning (resplendent in denim dress, red scarf and towering heels) and Lis (Cheshire Cat t-shirt!) share a hug, your correspondent gulps at witnessing a

moment of *Who* history. It's a shame Matt Smith couldn't share it – flights grounded, he's stranded in the US. "Death Of The Doctor" is the title of this third of six two-parters in *SJA*'s fourth series. Ponder that title and the presence of the Shansheeth – vulture-like intergalactic undertakers – and you can probably guess what brings together two of the Doctor's former companions in a secret UNIT base underneath Mount Snowdon... Once the reading gets underway, we discover it's a great script, both moving and uproariously funny. There are echoes of Sarah Jane's return in 2006 *Who* "School Reunion", and treats aplenty for old-school fans, with mentions of everything from Artron

Sarah Jane Smith is back, and this time she's teaming up with another classic companion... and the Eleventh Doctor! Ian Berriman reports

# Not your Average Jo







energy to the planet Karfel. As for Jo, the 2010 model is grown up, but certainly not grown old, a hippy nomad who's spent her life battling injustice in her own way. Afterwards, we ask Katy Manning how it feels to be back.

"When I walked in I was *nervous as...*" she confesses. "Then everybody was so very lovely, and made me feel very welcome. And when I was reading the script and I got to that scene with the Doctor, even in just a read-through where everybody's sitting around, I felt that me nose started to run!

"I've been so homesick for so many years," explains Manning, who recently returned to the UK after many years spent living in Australia, "and I don't think that anything nicer could have been offered to me. It's the best gift anybody could give somebody!"

#### THE CREATOR RETURNS

The man who wrapped that gift is the show's creator, Russell T Davies. We catch up with him several months later, once the episodes are in the can, and ask how he went about bringing back Jo.

"For the first time ever, I went and watched old stuff," Davies confesses. "We used to bring back monsters and I didn't actually go and watch the old tapes, partly because I think the way you remember them is just as powerful as what they actually were. But I did go back and watch the end of 'The Green Death' [Jo Grant's final story]. And I think it's really important to preserve the absolute beauty of what [producer] Barry Letts and [script editor] Terrance Dicks did there."

Back in 1973, Jo left the Doctor to marry idealistic ecologist Professor Jones, joining him on a trip up the Amazon in search of a fungus that could end world hunger. In spin-off adventures, her life took a different path, but Davies was determined to remain faithful to her TV last hurrah.

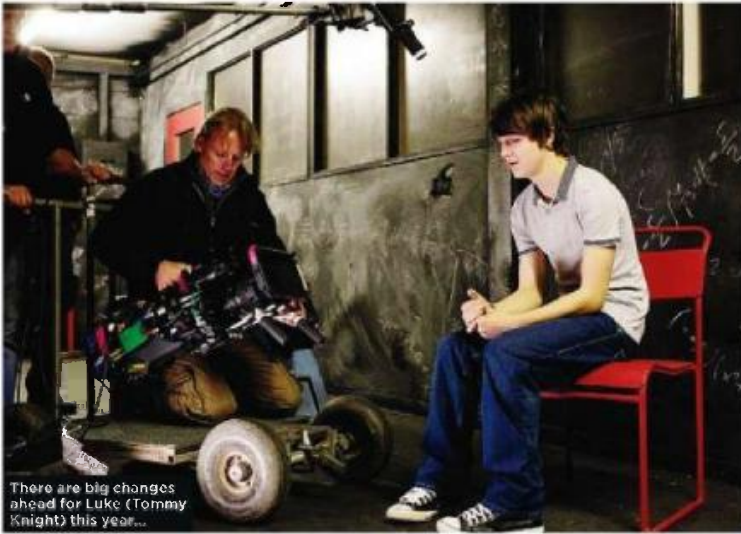
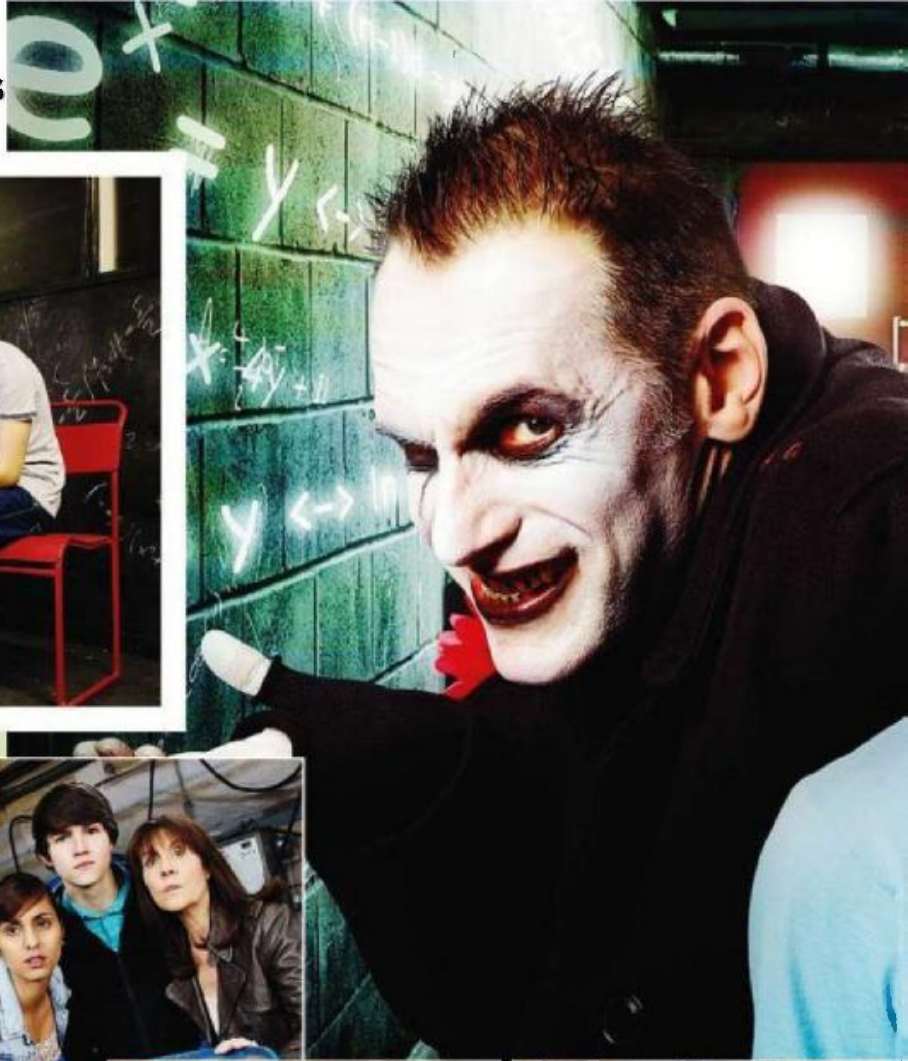
"We talked about it a lot beforehand," says Davies. "I know there's a feeling that she'd have got divorced, and there was a theory that she'd be living on her own in Wales in a little cottage - some of the novels did this - and you think, 'Nice idea, but actually that's absolutely betraying the way we left her'. We left her with the promise of happiness, of adventure, of love and joy, and you can't be cynical and undercut that by saying, 'Oh, she's a drug addict now! Her husband left her, she's lonely, her life is bitter'. That's just *interfering* with classic *Doctor Who* and rewriting what we were promised. So I was absolutely strict about that. I wasn't supposed to write this story first of all. Phil Ford >>



In 1973's "The Green Death", Jo left to marry Professor Jones.







There are big changes ahead for Luke (Tommy Knight) this year...

was. So when we were setting it up I said, 'You cannot make this a cynical story, and you cannot reduce her character by getting this adult draft undercutting all the beautiful memories that she left us with. So I think I've honoured the past and got it right.'

People can change a lot over the course of 37 years, of course. So how did they go about deciding how Jo would have changed, and what qualities must be retained?

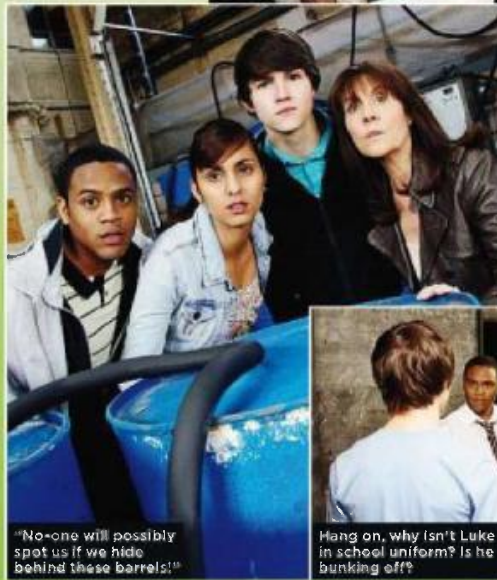
"Well, Katy Manning is absolutely marvellous in it," says Davies. "What's so lovely about her performance is that absolute lack of cynicism – there's a real bright, sparky optimism. There are some scenes that are quite sad, and one or two lines you could play as bitter or slightly angry, and she never plays it like that; she plays it with a smile every

## "It's the best gift anybody could give somebody" Katy Manning

time, and a really forgiving heart. The fact that the Doctor hasn't seen her again in all these years doesn't make her pissed off. It's lovely – there is a genuine innocence and wide-eyedness. And of course, Jo's someone who's travelled. She went off to live in the Amazon – not many people do that! She has to have got a certain amount of perspective from that – she's seen amazing things that most of us never will. You can travel in the TARDIS with the Doctor and see different planets but Jo, on Earth, has seen more amazing things than possibly any of the Doctor's other companions have."

Katy's entrance is classic Jo. She enters babbling good-naturedly, tripping over, and dropping a vase full of flowers.

"Well, that's famously supposed to be the way that Katy Manning auditioned – she'd forgotten her glasses and she



"No-one will possibly spot us if we hide behind these barrels!"



Hang on, why isn't Luke in school uniform? Is he bunking off?



The episode with the mysterious floating arm is particularly chilling.

walked in, fell over and Barry Letts said, 'Oh my god, that's the girl!' So it's riffing off that. There's all sorts of memories built into it – not just Jo Grant memories, but *Doctor Who* mythology memories of what people are like. As a fan, you inherit a lot of Katy Manning as well, so there are lines about her wearing glasses because of her famous short-sightedness and that sort of clumsiness, and that's actually Katy, not Jo."

As a *Who* fan himself, how does it feel to see these two immensely popular companions meet for the first time?

"The funny thing is, when you see Jo Grant and Sarah Jane Smith in the same scene together it's weird, because it's not as shocking as I thought it would be!" Davies admits. "I thought that'd be a real culture shock, like two eras meeting, and as a fanboy my hairs would be standing on end. But actually you watch it and it just feels right. Even though I know the history of *Doctor Who* very well, I sit



there going, 'Good lord, have they not met before?' Then you see the two of them sitting with Matt Smith, and it all seems completely natural. And you think, 'What a good, open and reflexive mythology this is – it really absorbs anything.'

### WHAT ABOUT WHO?

This story also sees the former *Who* showrunner writing for the Eleventh Doctor. When Davies ruled out writing more scripts for the series, we never thought we'd see that happen.

"I know!" chuckles Davies, clearly fearful our line of questioning is heading somewhere painfully obvious... "I wasn't meant to write this story, and when they phoned and said, 'You've got to write it,' literally the first thing I said was, 'I refuse to be interviewed and asked what's the difference between writing for David Tennant and Matt Smith! I refuse!'"

Er, we didn't ask, actually! But now you bring it up, what's the answer?

"What I did was take all my old lines of dialogue from David Tennant, and I cut them up, on laminated paper, and made them like those poetry





## "I WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF DOCTOR WHO ROYALTY!"

Matt Smith talks *SJA*

### How does the Doctor get involved with Sarah Jane and Jo?

» There are rumours of the Doctor's demise, which obviously cause Sarah Jane a great deal of concern and an understandable need to try and help by rushing to his side. Even if it may be a trap... It's drama on a grand scale, with some tense scenes inside a secret base beneath Mount Snowdon. We see the involvement of a formidable set of vulture aliens, the Shansheeth. They are known as galactic coffin bearers, so make of their presence what you will!

### How did you feel about taking the Doctor into one of *Who's* sister shows?

» Very excited! Even more so when I knew that Russell T Davies would be penning the episodes. I filmed *The Sarah Jane Adventures* after a period of time away from playing the Doctor and I'd really missed him. So going back to the role was fantastic.

### Does it give you particular pleasure to have filmed a programme aimed primarily at children?

» It does, because I think youngsters get a particular kick out of *Doctor Who*. They're the members of the audience who really believe what they are seeing, who literally watch episodes open-mouthed! I've got a picture on my phone of a couple of youngsters, children of somebody closely involved with *Doctor Who*, hiding behind a sofa while watching an episode. And that's the classic child's response to the programme - has been for generations!

### You're not only starring with long-time *Doctor Who* icon Lis Sladen but Katy Manning as well. Was that daunting?

» Well, I did feel I was in the presence of *Doctor Who* royalty! Both they, and their characters, go back a long way, and occasionally I'd be reminded of the show's long and glorious past. There's a scene where Sarah Jane makes reference to being stuck in a ventilation shaft, as she was during an adventure with a previous incarnation of the Doctor, and my character says, 'That takes me back - or maybe it takes me forward!' You never lose sight of the fact that you're part of a programme which has been around for a very long time and will doubtless go on for a very long time in the future, long after I've stopped playing the Doctor. Tim Oglethorpe



Exploding Silthreen? Mushy pea mishap? Or just a really bad cold?

## "I think I've honoured the past and got it right"

Russell T Davies

fridge magnets! Then I took all David Tennant's words and stuck them on the fridge, and I rearranged them so Matt Smith never says a word that David Tennant didn't say - oh, except I took two lines of Patrick Troughton from 'Tomb Of The Cybermen' to jazz it up a bit! So that's how I wrote it, just desperately parasiting off the past!"

Okay - ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer. But writing for the Doctor one more time must have felt a

bit weird, surely?

"Thing is, it didn't really feel like writing proper *Doctor Who*. Also, I invented *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, and I haven't had a chance to write it since the pilot, and it's so nice to get a chance to. I loved writing for Clyde and Rani, and there's a really nice couple of scenes for Rani's dad, Haresh, in there that balance Haresh a bit and give him a bit of wisdom, which I think is a little bit lacking sometimes. So it's my chance to do a little bit of fine-tuning, and I really loved that. I'm so glad we did this. I'm so pleased with it, I can't begin to tell you!" *SFX*

The *Sarah Jane Adventures* series four starts on BBC One in the week commencing 11 October. "Death Of The Doctor" airs in the week commencing 25 October. See the Sky + now, eh?