

In Manchester, Ronnie found work with Peter Knight at Granada. However, London was where it was at and Ronnie migrated south, working on a record stall at Watford market for a while.

The BBC offered Ronnie a job as staff arranger. He worked on the original *The Likely Lads* theme in 1964 and then, in 1966, wrote the well-known *It's a Knockout!* theme, which graced many an Eddie Waring performance. By 1968, Ronnie Hazlehurst was head of music on the BBC Light Entertainment roster.

His speciality was relating his theme pieces directly to the titles of the shows they were aimed at. Thus, *Are You Being Served?* (1972) featured cash registers and lift announcements. Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em (1974) saw two piccolos picking out the title in Morse code. This sparse theme was needed because the show's production had run over budget. *The Two Ronnies* was also one of our Ronnie's compositions. *Happy Ever After* (1974) and forerunner to *Terry and June*, *I Didn't Know You Cared* (1975) and *The Rise and Fall of Reginald Perrin* (1976) also added to his credits.

The tranquil music for *Last of the Summer Wine* (1973) was his work. As the 1970s mutated into the 1980s, *To the Manor Born* (1979) and *Yes Minister* (1980) maintained Ronnie's thematic grip on BBC comedy series.

It wasn't all comedy. Hazlehurst composed the music for the BBC's coverage of the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympics. He devised the music for the original 1972 *The Generation Game*. Other vocal theme tunes followed. He transcribed Dolly Parton's *Love Is Like a Butterfly* for Clare Torry to sing in 1978 as the theme to *Butterflies*. Similarly, Paul Nicholas was at the microphone for his reading of Ronnie's theme to *Just Good Friends* in 1986, in which Nicholas starred with Jan Francis.

Ronnie was no stranger to the Eurovision Song Contest. He acted as musical director when the UK hosted it in 1974, 1977 and 1982. He conducted the orchestra during the performances of – among others – Lynsey de Paul and Mike Moran in 1977 (*Rock Bottom* – the title, not the final position), for which he wore a bowler hat and wielded a closed umbrella instead of the traditional baton, and Michael Ball in 1992 (*One Step Out of Time*).

A genuinely nice guy, Ronnie Hazlehurst had suffered a stroke on 26 September 1977. He underwent a heart bypass operation in September 2007, from which he failed to regain consciousness and died five days later on 1 October, aged 79. 🇬🇧

# DOCTOR HO-HO!

Robert Ross takes a swift spin through some of the comedy stars who have stumbled into the Tardis



Carry On star Joan Sims played Katryca in *The Mysterious Planet* segment of the 12-part epic *The Trial of a Time Lord*.

**D**octor Who has always worn its sense of humour on its sleeve. The very first television parody of the series saw Clive Dunn adopt a William Hartnell wig for Michael Bentine's pioneering surreal sketch show *It's a Square World*. Fellow founding Goon Spike Milligan presented the Pakistani Daleks in his Q5 sketch show. Terry Nation, the creator of the scourge of Skaro, had been part of Spike's Associated London Scripts cooperative, so happily approved the pastiche.

In the 1970s, *Crackerjack* (*Crackerjack!*) spoofed the series with Don McLean as a Tom Baker-like Doctor, Jan Hunt as Sarah, and Peter Glaze as the Brigadier. It wasn't Glaze's first brush with Doctor Who, however, having encountered the original Doctor, William Hartnell, in the 1964 story *The Sensorites*. Bemasked and bewiskered, the clown is unrecognisable, save for that throaty whine... and the fact his girth stretches the monster costume.

The buxom figure of Faith Brown was equally impossible to conceal behind the wistful effervescence of Flast in the Colin Baker adventure *Attack of the Cybermen*; and while Alexei Sayle is recognisable as the DJ, in another Colin Baker story, *Revelation of the Daleks*, fellow Young One Christopher Ryan was encased in rubber as the Mentor Kiv in *The Trial of a Time Lord: Mindwarp*; and again as

Sontarans General Staal and Commander Stark opposite David Tennant and Matt Smith respectively.

Actor and comedian Peter Butterworth appeared in *The Time Meddler*, opposite William Hartnell. As the Meddling Monk, Butterworth was the first actor to play a villainous member of the Doctor's own race. By the time he joined forces with the Doctor's deadliest foe, in *The Daleks' Master Plan*, he had also joined the Carry On team.

There was pure evil at the heart of the gentle giant of Carry On, Bernard Bresslaw, when, caked in fibreglass, as Varga, leader of *The Ice Warriors*, he terrorises Patrick Troughton. Joan Sims is warrior Queen Katryca in *The Mysterious Planet*, the first instalments of Colin Baker's *The Trial of a Time Lord*.

Admitting to having no grasp on the concept of science fiction, Joan simply learned the lines and delivered them brilliantly. Beryl Reid, too, understood little of the Peter Davison Cyberman serial *Earthshock*, in which she played Captain Briggs. Her, possibly apocryphal but hilarious, reaction was: "Warp Drive? Is that anywhere near Acadia Avenue?"

Leslie Dwyer turns on the razzamatatz as showman Vorg in the Jon

Comedian Catherine Tate and David Tennant are returning as Donna and the Doctor in this month's Doctor Who anniversary specials. Rowan Atkinson led an all-star cast in the 1999 Red Nose Day spoof *The Curse of Fatal Death*.

Pertwee story *Carnival of Monsters*. His glamorous assistant Shirna is played by Cheryl Hall, who would find sitcom fame as Wolfie's girlfriend in *Citizen Smith*. Dwyer, too, hit sitcom pay-dirt, as grumpy Punch and Judy man Mr Partridge in *Hi-de-Hi!* Ballroom dancer Barry Stuart-Hargreaves actor Barry Howard would be part of the Silver Cloak Gang – along with Dame June Whitfield – in David Tennant's *The End of Time*.

Michael Robbins, best-loved as curmudgeon Arthur Rudge in *On the Buses*, channels his 17th century thespian, as the flamboyant Richard Mace in the Peter Davison serial *The Visitation*; while Richard Wilson, everybody's favourite retiree, Victor Meldrew in *One Foot in the Grave*, is Doctor Constantine in Christopher Eccleston's World War Two-set episodes *The Empty Child* and *The Doctor Dances*.

Get Some In!'s Tony Selby delights as the unscrupulous Sabalom Glitz opposite the Doctors of Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy; while Derek Francis goes gleefully over-the-top as Nero in *The Romans*, alongside skilled farceur William Hartnell.

Hywel Bennett, later workshopy Shelley, dons gills to play Rynian the Aridian in the William Hartnell epic *The Chase*; it Ain't Half Hot Mum star Windsor Davies faced *The Evil of the Daleks*, with Patrick Troughton; while Fulton Mackay, prison officer Mr Mackay in *Porridge*, meets the Silurians in Jon Pertwee's *Doctor Who* and the Silurians.

Simon Pegg is the Editor, a peroxide megalomaniac in the Christopher Eccleston story *The Long Game*. Pegg had previously met Paul McGann in the Big Finish audio story *Invaders from Mars*, in which David Benson – best known for playing Noël Coward in *Goodnight Sweetheart* – played Orson Welles. On television, he would play the Herald in the Peter Capaldi episode *Robot of Sherwood*: both written by *The League of Gentlemen*'s Mark Gatiss, who has enjoyed a long and fruitful love affair with *Doctor Who*.

Fellow *Doctor Who* fan Frank Skinner was thrilled to bits to be cast as Engineer Perkins in the Capaldi thriller *Mummy on the Orient Express*; while Matt Lucas played Capaldi's companion Nardole.

Bradley Walsh and John Bishop have travelled with Jodie Whittaker; while



Catherine Tate bickered with David Tennant as a kind of Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy in space. Bernard Cribbins played her grandfather and became such a vital part of the Tennant era that he returned for the 60th anniversary specials, completing filming just before his death in July 2022. Bernard's association stretches back to playing bumbling policeman Tom Campbell in the Peter Cushing film *Daleks Invasion Earth 2150AD*; and over at Big Finish, he chalked up another *Doctor*, Paul McGann, in *Horror of Glam Rock*.

Only *Fools and Horses* legend Roger Lloyd Pack swapped well-heeled broom for world domination as mad controller John Lumic in the David Tennant double-bill *Rise of the Cybermen* and *The Age of Steel*; while it was *Only Fools and Krynoid* for John Challis and Tom Baker in *The Seeds of Doom*.

Cassandra's folks did their *Doctor Who* duty, too: both Denis Lill and Wanda Ventham guest star in the Tom Baker romp *Image of the Fendahl*; with Denis playing Sir George Hutchinson alongside Peter Davison's *Doctor in The Awakening*, and Wanda applying scales to play Farouh the Lakertyan in Sylvester McCoy's debut story, *Time and the Rani*.

The McCoy era is awash with comedy credentials: there's front cloth genius Ken Dodd, as the glitzy Tollmaster in *Delta*, and the Bannermen (a serial that also featured Welsh fraternity in Hancock's Hugh Lloyd, and Please Sir!'s Richard Davies); and *The Good Life*'s Richard Briers as the demonic Chief Caretaker in *Paradise Towers*.

Impressionist Jessica Martin was cast as feral creature of the night Mags in *The*

Greatest Show in the Galaxy, alongside booming battleaxe Peggy Mount, and Adrian Mole star Gian Sammarco as bespectacled fanboy Whizzkid. Jessica returned to the series, to voice a grateful Queen Elizabeth II, in the Tennant Christmas special *Voyage of the Damned*, while Gareth Hale and Norman Pace were shopkeepers Len and Harvey in *Survival*, the final story of the show's original run.

Paul O'Grady gave a hilarious cameo as his chat show host self in Tennant's *The Stolen Earth*, while Barbara Windsor, in her *EastEnders* guise as Peggy Mitchell, also gives real gravitas to the crisis in *Army of Ghosts*.

Equally meta had been John Cleese and Eleanor Bron admiring Tom Baker's TARDIS in the Louvre, at the climax of *City of Death*. Cleese, as a pompous art critic, pontificates, as the Doctor grins, jumps into his time machine, and dematerialises. Exquisite. Well, it was scripted by Douglas Adams.

Stephen Fry and Lenny Henry sparkled alongside Jodie Whittaker in *Spyfall*. Sir Lenny had previously played a version of the Doctor in a sketch in *The Lenny Henry Show*, and for the opening of

2022's *Comic Relief* telethon regenerated into host David Tennant. The ultimate *Comic Relief* spoof came in 1999 when Rowan Atkinson gave his very Blackadder-like *Doctor in The Curse of Fatal Death*, with a raffish Richard E Grant, a bumbling Jim Broadbent, and a dashing Hugh Grant rattling through generations, before settling on the first female Doctor, the Absolutely Fabulous Joanna Lumley.

It was scripted by Steven Moffat who, 20 years later, would become showrunner for the relaunched *Doctor Who*. Just another example of the inmates gloriously taking over the TARDIS. 📺

**Robert Ross, Britain's comedy historian, is the author of three Doctor Who audio plays for Big Finish Productions (01628 824102, bigfinish.com), which star Colin Baker as the Doctor. Roy Hudd plays Max Miller in Pier Pressure, while Carry On star Leslie Phillips is Dr Robert Knox in Medicinal Purposes and Assassin in the Limelight.**

**Classic Doctor Who is available to stream on BritBox, while the post-2005 series can be viewed via BBC iPlayer. The Curse of Fatal death is available at [youtu.be/Do-wDPoC6GM](http://youtu.be/Do-wDPoC6GM)**