



Upcoming John Ridgway Art

THE DOCTOR'S ADVENTURES

It's 1979. Margaret Hilda Thatcher has just entered office, the Falklands is just pimple on the bum of the South Atlantic, The Jesus and Mary Chain are a glimmer in the eyes of two pre-pubescent Scottish brothers, and Marvel UK have just launched a new title. Doctor Who Weekly's first issue boasts a set of free transfers and a motley crew of writers and artists such as Pat Mills, John Wagner, Dave Gibbons, Steve Moore, Steve Dillon

MICHAEL BONNER takes a retrospective look at the perennial Marvel UK favourite - **DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE** - as it celebrates its tenth birthday. Pay attention, questions will be asked later ...

and David Lloyd.

Marvel bought the rights for the Doctor Who comic strip following the demise of the strip in TV Comic. TV Comic had been experiencing declining sales following a surge towards Marvel and DC material, which had become readily available due to the growing direct sales market. The sudden accessibility of US titles meant that super heroes were in, and



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science fiction/space/fantasy stories were out, so interest in The Doctor had declined and TV Comic dropped him.

Doctor Who Weekly was the idea of Dez Skinn (remember him, kids ..?) who was an editor for Marvel at the time (before Warrior and, according to rumour, before starting a telephone chatline ...). Skinn had developed the idea of a mixed format title running strips and articles side by side in House of Hammer a year or so previous to this, and put it to BBC Doctor Who producer that something similar might be possible for the good Doctor. Williams agreed, and so Doctor Who Weekly hit the stands in late October with the sort of dull thud that large piles of paper usually do.

Originally Skinn wanted to keep the title as in-house as possible to maintain tight control. The line-up was to be Marvel UK's art editor Paul Neary pencilling, and Dave Gibbons inking it. Dave wanted to illustrate it full time, feeling that by inking it he was laying claim to something that was not originally his. Skinn agreed, and so the next move was to find some writers. Dave Gibbons - knowing Pat Mills and John Wagner had submitted scripts to the BBC for Doctor Who - suggested to Skinn that they write the strip. So, with a team of Mills, Wagner and Gibbons the main strip was off and running in the same



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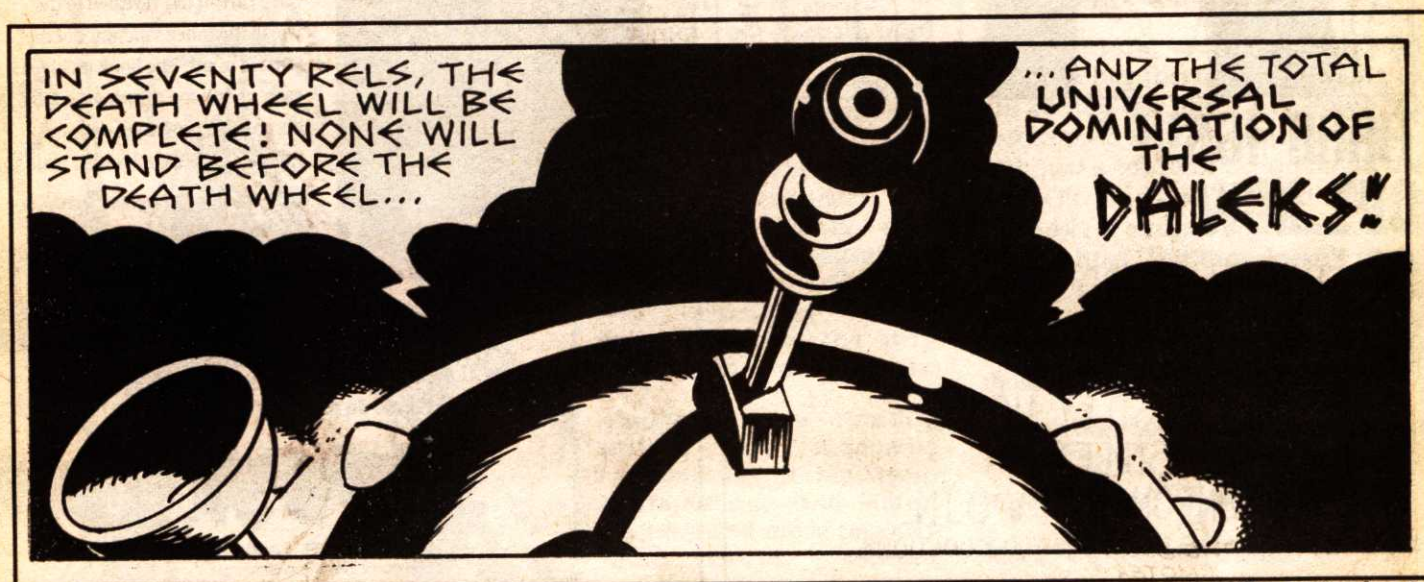
way someone who's just eaten thirty exceptionally hot curries might (but without as much mess).

The final item on the agenda were the back-up strips. While the main strip featured the Doctor against specially created monsters the back-up strips were to exclusively feature nasties from the television series in their own stories. For this task the team of Steve Moore, Steve Dillon and David Lloyd were chosen - all Marvel contributors (mostly for Hulk Weekly) - and Paul Neary. Like the main strips, the

subject matter was mostly fairly simple; Daleks and Cybermen taking the obligatory stab at universal domination. However, more memorable characters came to light - in particular Kroton, the Cyberman with a soul, and the psychotic Abslom Daak. When Skinn left Doctor Who Weekly for Warrior he took with him a few of the ideas he had for the title - Daak became a prototype for Axel Pressbutton, while Alan Moore and David Lloyd's collaboration on several of the back up strips paved the way for their collaboration on V for Vandatta. And I bet you thought it was Night Raven.

One interesting point about the strip - though not an entirely true one - is the link between Steve Dillon's portrayal of the Cybermen and Andy Warhol's Factory. In true Doctor Who style, a page of Steve's artwork vanished into a time warp where it materialised in New York circa 1963. Warhol came into possession of the page and - so impressed was he - that he decorated the Factory in silver foil as a homage both to the Cybes (as they became known) and to Steve's art. SPEAKEASY staffers were also wondering whether this might also have encouraged Warhol (as in War-huh) to take a look at seminal Jack Kirby strips of the time, or whether Edie Sedgwick might have made a

I N C O M I X





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great Doctor assistant. But we digress ...*

Skinn left the title almost as it went monthly, and Alan McKenzie eventually landed the job as editor. Pat and John were long gone by now, and the main strip had passed through the hands of Steve Moore (promoted from back-up strip duty). Steve left for pastures new and the job landed at the feet of yet another Steve, Parkhouse. Steve no. 3 - with artist John Ridgway - created some ground breaking strips, including 'Voyager' (recently released in graphic novel format - buy it while stocks last). Whereas the strips had been fairly tame up until that point, 'Voyager' was a roller coaster of a ride through dreams, Death and rogue Time Lords that was certainly one of the best pieces of British comic strip of the time (and hasn't yet been surpassed in the title).

After 'Voyager', Steve kept the strip running until he felt it was time to leave. Under a pseudonym, McKenzie took over the writing until Marvel decided to rotate the writers. They felt that different writers kept the strip fresh - however the strip was littered with continuity errors, especially those concerning the most popular penguin in British comics, Frobisher. Devised by Steve Parkhouse, Frobisher was a shape shifting alien who just happened to contract a disease and become stuck as a penguin (the problems of being able to change shape meant that Frobisher could basically get out of Any Tricky Situation involving corridors ... quarries ... mines etc.) Frobisher's "disease" - monomorphia - came and went depending on the writers, making the strip irritating to a lot of readers.

Amongst those rotating writers, the magazine included Grant Morrison, Jamie Delano and Simon Furman and more recently Alan Grant, Richard

Starkings (who ...?) and John Carnell have graced the pages of the title with their work. John Ridgway finished illustrating the strip following rumours of the title's cancellation, and the fact that DC were offering him more dosh to do Hellblazer, did nothing to dissuade him either (however, since then he's made various guest appearances and, I'm reliably informed, is due to return once more again in the near future.) Various artists followed John onto the strip, including Dave Hine, Kev Hopgood, Lee Sullivan and - perhaps best of all - Dougie Brathwaite. And later, Dave Elliot, John Higgins, Kev Hopgood and Andy Lanning all combined for a mega odd Sleeze Brothers promotional crossover. All good wholesome stuff.

On a more corporate level, Marvel have just announced that as from January's issue #157, the title is to be distributed in America by Marvel US - an issue featuring a Dan Abnett/John Ridgway story - 'Hunger From the Ends of Time'. 'Hunger ...' is the first story that will be a reprint from a new Marvel title, Hulk Presents, that is to feature a Doctor Who comic strip. Other gems forthcoming include the guest appearance of Sarah-Jane Smith (an old Tom Baker companion). Currently on sale (I was told to say this one) is the tenth Anniversary Special featuring the portfolio illustrations from Dave Gibbons, Lee Sullivan and Mick Austin. Buy it! Marvel are also putting together a second graphic novel of DWM material, this one featuring Abslom Daak, with a new cover by Steve Dillon and the interior colouring by David Lloyd - start saving now!

To the future, current editor John Freeman has this to say: "As long as I'm editing the title I'll be doing my best to push for new strips, new ideas, with just a touch of action along the way. Obviously we're faced with the same sort of budgeting problems as all Marvel titles, but that doesn't mean we can't at least strive to keep the strips fresh, exciting and new to the best of the best of the abilities of all those who contribute."

All together now: "Happy birthday to you ..."

Happy birthday to you ..."

*OK so we fantasise a little.