

NOBODY LIKES GOODBYES – but when you're an inveterate weeper like Jodie Whittaker, the kind of person who can barely get through a Christmas advert without sniffles, endings are unbearable. "I am that person," she says. "I cry. I cry if someone else cries and I'm not even upset. So my last scene? That last day? It was so emotional."

"That last day" was Whittaker's final day as the Doctor. *Doctor Who* isn't always shot in scene order – a finale can just as well be filmed on day one – but in this case her regeneration scene was the last thing she filmed as the time-travelling Time Lord.

"Ninety per cent of that last day I was basically in bits," she says. "It's the best job I've ever done and I've loved every second of it, but it was the right time. It was like giving yourself stitches – you know you need to do it, but it felt like s**t."

And so she cried. A lot. Jodie Whittaker is, by her own admission, an emotional person, full of smiles, tears and – as in this interview – near-constant laughter.

"I'm always on the brink of tears. And I've had to contain that playing this character more than I do most characters I've ever played. Usually being on the brink is like my winning ticket. With the Doctor I'm much happier [she says it with jazz hands] than I normally am."

Whittaker credits departing showrunner Chris Chibnall – who also wrote for her on three series of *Broadchurch* as the endlessly browbeaten Beth Latimer – for bringing out the real Jodie.

"For a long time I don't think anyone knew that I had a Yorkshire accent and laughed a lot. Had Chris not been the person to give me this job I don't think I'd have been seen for it."

Chibnall got to know Whittaker on *Broadchurch*, where he saw the person in between takes, when she wasn't performing or doing "troubled". That person is, in her own description, "a bit fidgety, a bit twitchy, doesn't sit still, tries to have about 15 conversations but doesn't quite get to the end of any of them, winds everyone up because I'm really exhausting and I don't know when to shut up..."

It's true – the real Jodie does talk a dime a dozen, spiralling off on errant, Tardis-style tangents that are both maddening and fascinating (ranging from her terrible handwriting and an anecdote about spiders to her well-documented love of Coldplay).

One thing she loves about *Doctor Who* and the passing of the torch is that it legitimises this level of discussion.

"This is the only job where you get to go to the next person, 'Can I just tell you what I think?' whether they want it or not. David [Tennant], Matt [Smith] and Peter [Capaldi] never tried to say to me, 'This is what it's going to be like,' but the one headline they all said was, 'It's like nothing you've ever done.' So what I would say [to Neuti Gatwa, the new Doctor] is to just be really,

FAREWELL TO THE DOCTOR

THE TIME OF MY LIFE...

As Jodie Whittaker bows out of *Doctor Who* this week, she talks of the tears, the laughter – and facing down her critics

SHOWDOWN
In her final chapter, the 13th Doctor (Jodie Whittaker) faces her deadliest foes...

WHO'S NEXT?

Meet the new Time Lord, played by Ncuti Gatwa

Jodie Whittaker is handing in her sonic screwdriver with the Doctor ready to regenerate into a new actor – but in an unusual twist, there's not one but two Time Lords waiting in the wings. Both 30-year-old Ncuti Gatwa (*Sex Education*) and former *Doctor Who* star David Tennant are set to take the Tardis for a spin in 2023, with Tennant reprising the role of the Doctor 13 years after he originally left the show while Gatwa plays a new incarnation of the time-travelling hero. How? Why? Returning series boss Russell T Davies isn't telling.

"It looks impossible – first, we announce a new Doctor, then an old Doctor!" he said earlier this year. "Maybe this is a missing story. Or a parallel world. Or a dream, or a trick, or a flashback."

Whether the two actors will share the screen or appear in separate stories is also a mystery, though on-set photos have seen Tennant reunite with his former *Who* co-stars Catherine Tate and the late Bernard Cribbins, as well as US actor Neil Patrick Harris (*It's a Sin*) playing a new villain.

Gatwa, meanwhile, has been busy filming more *Sex Education*, suggesting it might be a bit longer before he gets his facetime with the Daleks, the Cybermen and (deadliest of all) the critics.

And who knows? With *Doctor Who*'s 60th anniversary scheduled for celebration next autumn, there might be yet more ex-series stars dusting off scarves, celery sticks and question-mark accessories in preparation for the traditional multi-Doctor mash-up (as in 2013's 50th anniversary, where Matt Smith teamed up with Tennant and John Hurt).

Clearly, Tardises are like buses – you wait all this time for one... **HUW FULLERTON**

really in the moment. I realised within an hour of starting that I was going to have the time of my life."

She says that although she hasn't actually met Gatwa in person yet, they have spoken about the role. "He's going to be amazing. Even just hearing his voice you can tell he is someone who speaks with a smile. And I absolutely love that in people. That kind of energy for the Doctor is beautiful."

She delivers that line with a thunderous expletive and I tell her that it's funny to hear Whittaker swear. In fact, she swears quite a lot.

"Why do you have to pick up on one of my flaws?" she says, laughing. "When I'm at work I'm a nightmare. Especially when I forget a line. It really rolls off the tongue. It's like, 'Beep. BEEP. BEEEEEP!'"

It's only striking because we haven't heard her swear much before. She is, after all, the Doctor, the lead role on a flagship BBC

'Ninety per cent of that last day I was in bits... but it was the right time'

programme that brings with it an ambassadorial brief. There's a scrutiny that comes with the job. With Whittaker, it came from the moment her casting was announced.

"This was a massive break but I was 36, I'd already worked. So I knew the bits of my job I liked and the bits I didn't. I'd already decided a long time before this job what I'm comfortable with, and a lot of that is blocking out noise. So therefore zero social media: don't need to know. And then it's just about knowing you're working for a show that's bigger than you. Just don't be cocky and disrespect it."

THAT INCLUDES FAN interactions because everyone wants a selfie with the Doctor. "If you don't want people coming up to you, particularly fans, don't do this job. To me, if someone's like, 'Oh my God, I'm a massive *Doctor Who* fan!' that's great. I wasn't a Whovian beforehand but I'm a massive fan now."

Not all her fan experiences have been so positive, however. When it was announced in 2017 that a woman would take the previously male role of the Doctor, some disgruntled fans criticised the move, even starting a Twitter hashtag called #notmydoctor. Despite avoiding social media, it's clear Whittaker was aware of the vitriol, which has continued on and off throughout her tenure.

"No bras in the Tardis!" she barks back in a silly voice. "Come on! What's your argument? I'm. Playing. An. Alien!" There's a fine line between the hilarity of it and the fact that it's ▷

TIMES TWO
As the new, 14th incarnation of the Doctor, Ncuti Gatwa may join forces with the tenth (David Tennant) in next year's 60th anniversary story

ACE IN THE PACK

Former companions Ace and Tegan are back! Sophie Aldred and Janet Fielding tell all

◁ terrifying that a woman being given a particular job can cause so much rage. It's just a tiny vial of rage, of course, but the anger, the negativity, are always the loudest."

A fact that isn't mentioned much is that Whittaker's time in the Tardis has coincided with her being a mum to a young daughter and, this year, to another baby. This is by design: she has been adamant that she doesn't talk about her children, to the point where she hasn't even made their names public. Even so, *Doctor Who* is a lot of work, a lot of time away from home – and any parent will tell you that the simplest job changes completely with a toddler in tow.

"It opens up a can of worms to talk about it," she says, explaining her reluctance to cover the topic, "but I have been so lucky, because I have an amazing support network. Without that the wheels would have come off."

SHE DOES SAY that for all of her final episode, which was filmed this time last year, she was in the early stages of pregnancy. "I was very sick and no one knew. [Co-star and friend] Mandip Gill didn't know because I didn't want to worry her. She did keep commenting on how much chocolate I was eating – 'That's your third Penguin!' Filming and feeling sick – that's when I really felt sorry for myself."

Now she is, she says, "on maternity leave. I didn't think at 40 that I'd be going into an interview and saying I'm on maternity leave. But I don't really need to think about work at this time, so I'm really lucky."

Whenever she does return to work, she has the satisfaction of knowing she won't be repeating herself – there's no other character quite like the Doctor. And she knows that old Doctors never retire. David Tennant, for example, is back next year for the show's 60th anniversary celebrations.

"I said to [new showrunner] Russell T Davies, 'Don't ever think of it as being 'too soon,'" she says. "If I'm not asked back, I will be devastated. I know it might need to be a few years, but Russell knows – I'm going to be like a little terrier at his heels." **BENJI WILSON**

Your characters Ace and Tegan are back – how did it feel to get the call?

SOPHIE ALDRED

When I got the call, I burst into tears. I wasn't conscious of it, but it's the call I've always been hoping for, you know? There aren't many jobs where you can say that you've been playing the same part for 33 years. Maybe in *The Archers*. It's extraordinary.

JANET FIELDING What can I say? How many shows give you that opportunity? It's been 35 years since I acted on camera, so it was an adjustment. I did the series in my 20s but now I'm in my 60s. So it's not as easy as it once was. But at least, these days, I don't have [former series boss] John Nathan-Turner telling me what I'm going to wear. When I had my meeting for the costume, it was like:

"Where are the sneakers? And will there be jeans?" I'm not fighting monsters in a short skirt again, and that's it.

What have Tegan and Ace been up to since we saw them last in the 1980s? Is Ace still a massive tomboy?

JF Let's start at the top: Tegan has not mellowed. Those of you who are thinking that she's become soft and gentle in her old age – dream on! She's in her 60s and she's taking no s*** from anybody. And that includes the Doctor, as it always has.

SA Ace is the CEO of this charity, and wears a suit, but actually is never that far away from a baseball bat – and she still wears the Doc Martens.

When your return was announced earlier this

year it became big news – did you get a lot of attention?

SA Twitter exploded. I was just getting message after message after message, going, "I'm screaming, I'm crying, I've hit my head because I've jumped off of the sofa!"

JF I do Twitter. I don't do Insta. I'm a reluctant social media person. But the reaction has just been extraordinary. It's so enthusiastic.

SA Somebody said that the BBC News website the next day went: "War in Ukraine. Partygate. Janet Fielding and Sophie Aldred back in *Doctor Who*." It really was that huge. It took us all by surprise.

What about your former *Doctor Who* co-stars, Peter Davison and Sylvester McCoy? How did they react?

SA Sylvester was delighted – he was one of the first people to text me. He's an emoji king, so there were loads of little symbols and "Congratulations, I can't wait to see it".

JF I've seen Peter, and I don't think gloating is a very attractive thing to do, but there are times when you just have to... We are great mates. But we do spend a lot of time trying to take the mickey out of each other.

Jodie Whittaker is leaving *Doctor Who* – but are you both living proof that you never really say goodbye to the show?

SA I remember when I first got the part, someone said to me, "Welcome to the family," and I immediately thought "Yuck!" But it's absolutely true. It is a family. We said to Jodie and Mandip, "You'll never leave."

JF I don't think Jodie even needed telling about that. I think she was already aware of it.

SA Back in the day, what was upsetting for Sylvester and me was that *Doctor Who* had been cancelled [in 1989]. This isn't cancellation. It's something that Jodie has been expecting for a long time, and working towards, so it's more like a sort of completion. **HF**

FRIENDS THROUGH TIME

From top: Sophie Aldred as Ace; Janet Fielding as Tegan; Aldred in 1988 with Sylvester McCoy's seventh Doctor; Fielding in 1983 with Peter Davison's fifth