

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Lifelong *Doctor Who* fan Mark Gatiss delivers a love letter to a great British eccentric



RELATIVE DIMENSIONS

In *An Adventure in Space and Time*, David Bradley plays the first Doctor and Claudia Grant is his granddaughter, Susan. Inset, right: the original, 1963 versions (William Hartnell and Carole Ann Ford)



An Adventure in Space and Time

Thursday 9.00pm BBC2



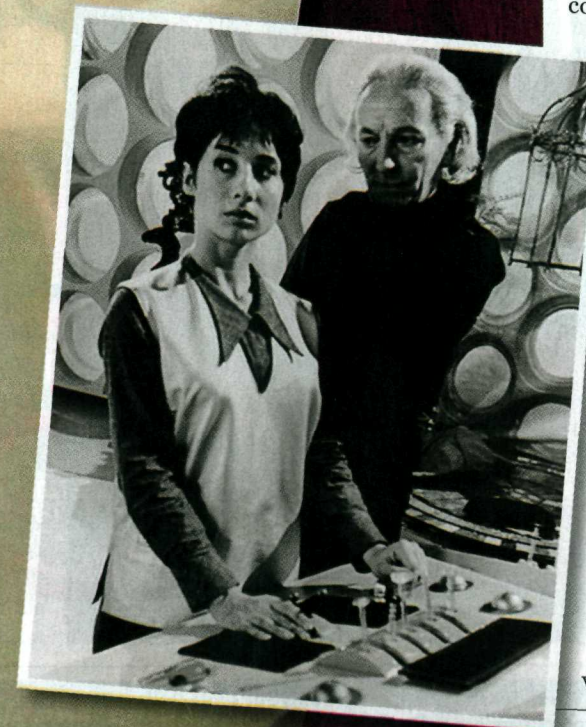
MY FIRST MEMORY of *Doctor Who* (indeed almost my first memory of anything) is of shop-window dummies coming to life in Jon Pertwee's very first adventure in 1970. I was only four years old and instantly hooked on this strange, delightful, frightening show. (I also couldn't go near March the Tailor without hiding behind my mam's legs.)

As my love for the programme developed, I yearned to know more about its past. I interrogated my family (they could do a mean impersonation of the Fish People from *The Underwater Menace*, 1967) and my brother would speak darkly of "the one with the Cybermen in the sewers". But true enlightenment only arrived with the publication of Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke's book, *The Making of Doctor Who*, a fascinating behind-the-scenes account of how the show was made, in which I discovered all sorts of new terms like producer, floor manager and script editor. Even better, it had a photo of a Sea Devil on the cover!

This was followed by the *Radio Times Tenth Anniversary Special*: a sumptuous look back at ten years of *Doctor Who*, which included heart-stoppingly thrilling black-and-white photos of a time when the Doctor had been *someone else*. From these publications I learnt the story of how my favourite show had begun. Of how something designed to fill a gap between the Saturday sports coverage and *Juke Box Jury* had become a national institution. Of how the first episode had gone out the day after JFK's assassination and a shocked nation hadn't paid it any attention. Of how no one in the production had actually liked the Daleks. Even though Jon Pertwee was my Doctor, I was always fascinated by this story, coming, as it seemed to me, from an almost impossibly distant past. A postwar world of smoggy Novembers, white macs and a BBC run by ex-wing commanders in neckerchiefs.

About 13 years ago I first began to mull the idea of writing a drama based around these events. I even got so far as to propose it be made for *Doctor Who's* 40th anniversary in 2003! But, of course, the series was off the air then and had been since 1989. There were no takers for my little idea. Ironically, it was later that same year that the show's return was announced and Russell T Davies's spectacular reinvention went on to conquer the world (which is more than the Daleks, Cybermen or even the Nestene Consciousness ever did). Now, having written for the show since its return, I once again proposed the idea of a drama telling the story of its genesis and this time met with a very warm reception.

From the beginning, though, the challenge was how to give the story focus. Early drafts >





FRIENDS AND FOES

Left: Jemma Powell and Jamie Glover play first companions Barbara and Ian. Above: original Barbara (actress Jacqueline Hill) with a 1965 Menoptra on Vortis

◁ included far more about William Hartnell's illegitimate birth and urchin-like upbringing. There was a subplot based around the creation of the Daleks and the very different fortunes of their creators, writer Terry Nation and designer Raymond Cusick. There was even a nod to the little-known fact that the BBC staff designer who was meant to design the Daleks was Ridley Scott!

But I had to take off my inner anorak (if you can imagine such a thing) and be as dispassionate as possible about my beloved subject. This was to be a drama, after all, not a documentary. So, much as it pained me, many of the people involved in the serendipitous birth of *Doctor Who* simply couldn't be included.

In the end, I focused on four people: Sydney Newman, the extraordinary "godfather" of the show, a Barnum-like Canadian brimming with invention whom the BBC had poached from ABC; Waris Hussein, a 24-year-old Anglo-Indian who found himself directing the very first story, much against his better judgement; the legen-

dary Verity Lambert, *Doctor Who*'s first producer and the first female drama producer at the BBC; and, principally, William Hartnell, a complex man, old beyond his years, who found in the Doctor the role that transformed his life.

The creation of the film has been a great adventure all of its own, replete with spooky coincidences and moving moments: the recreation of the original Tardis set, which caused every visitor's jaw to drop; original companion actors Carole Ann Ford and William Russell watching as David Bradley filmed some of his most emotional scenes; and, perhaps most spine-tingling of all, the original Marconi cameras that we used to re-create the look of an old BBC studio. When hooked up to their original monitors, they produced an identical image quality to those from 1963. Through the haze of 405 lines, it was like gazing through a telescope into the past.

Though *An Adventure in Space and Time* is my love letter to *Doctor Who*, my hope was always to celebrate the show and create a human interest drama that could appeal to anyone. Hartnell was given the role of a lifetime and found himself utterly changed by it. In the end, though, he discovered he was replaceable. Alas, that's not a quality restricted to Time Lords. It's true for us all.

In this 50th anniversary year, it's been wonderful to look back to the very beginnings and fulfil a long-held dream to tell the story of how a group of talented and unlikely people created one of television's true originals. But it's also a time to look forward. To say a sad farewell to the brilliant Matt Smith and to welcome Peter Capaldi who, in just a few short months, will become the newest tenant of the Tardis.

Happy Birthday, *Doctor Who*!

"There's more about William Hartnell's illegitimate birth and urchin-like upbringing"

The result is *An Adventure in Space and Time*, starring Brian Cox, Jessica Raine, Sacha Dhawan and David Bradley as Hartnell. His startling resemblance to "the original" is the least of his remarkable qualities. David seemed to find a

TIME GENTLEMEN
David Bradley as William Hartnell and, right, William Hartnell as the Doctor in 1965

