



AN ADVENTURE IN SPACE AND TIME

WORDS DARREN SCOTT



he origins of the world's greatest TV show are going to tug on your heart strings this month, as writer and actor Mark Gatiss takes us right back to where we started from...

It's late February, 2013 and GT is going further back than ever before – back to before Doctor Who even started in 1963. Pink signs lead the way to Wimbledon Studios in London, where filming is taking place on Mark Gatiss' drama about the origins of Doctor Who. It's entirely possible that *An Adventure In Space And Time*, starring David Bradley as William Hartnell – the First Doctor – could be the jewel in the crown of the 50th anniversary celebrations.

As we walk through the studios, we spot offices with reference pictures of the original cast of Doctor Who and someone painting a large sign that reads 'It Is Forbidden To Dump Bodies In The River'. Not going to lie, we're a little bit excited.

And why on Earth wouldn't we be? It's written by blooming Mark Gatiss for goodness sake! And even he's coming up to us, grabbing our arm and screaming in that way that only proper fans do. Because, quite simply, this is a dream come true. Not just for us, or for the fans, but for Mark himself, as he's wanted to get this project off the ground for a while...

"About 12 years I think it is. And I did originally pitch it for the 40th

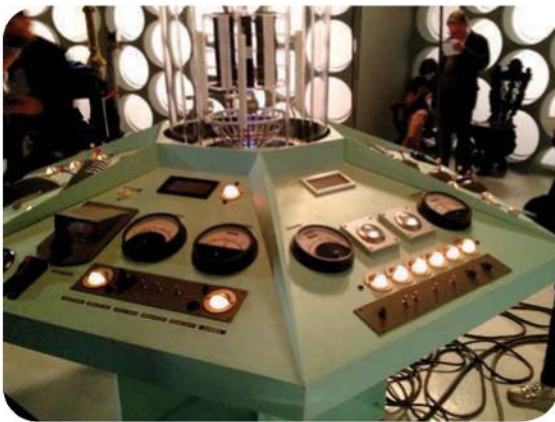
anniversary, which was just before the show came back, but now it's all kind of perfectly come together. Couldn't be happier."

You can tell, as he poses beside a beautiful recreation of the original TARDIS console set. The biggest set since 1963, in fact. If anyone asks, we just had a bit of dust in our eye...

Many scenes from early episodes now missing from the BBC archives have also been recreated – and look eerily accurate. It's quite staggering – and somewhat humbling – to watch a re-enactment of the moment two school teachers stumble into a Police Box in a junkyard. OK, so it's not dust in our eye. It's a beautiful moment.

"It's about the creation of the programme and William Hartnell and [Producer] Verity Lambert's close bond at the absolute heart of it," Mark explains. "There's a bit of stuff about what the show nearly was and how it then became the show that we know. So many happy accidents, so much serendipity involved, especially the kind of crucible of these talents. Verity was the first female producer at the BBC, she was only 27. Bill Hartnell was an actor typecast in a certain kind of role, who then got this opportunity and then became a hero to the children of the nation and it totally changed his life. I suppose it is the little show that could, that's the thing; no-one expected much of it, and then it just clicked. And I suppose the abiding legacy is that William Hartnell's increasing illness and inability to carry on actually means we are sitting here today, because of the regeneration. If he had been in perfectly good health, maybe they would have done five years and then something else. It could easily be one of those shows that we remember from the 60's. Funnily enough, again, I guess a strange coincidence, the fact that he had to go because he was too ill to continue, but [the creator of Doctor Who] Sydney





Newman, who very much wanted it to carry on, means that they invented another of the single most brilliant ideas anyone has ever had to continue a television programme.

"In early drafts I had a whole sub-plot about the creation of the Daleks – not Davros, Terry Nation and Ray Cusick. Terry wrote the script and became a millionaire, Ray designed the Daleks and got a Blue Peter badge. That's an entire story. So the difficult thing – especially difficult as an anorak – is to just focus on one particular thing, but of course as a drama, that's what it has to be, it's not a documentary. And there is an

on four studio cameras, we'll probably put them on, but they already exist. It's entirely up to you, but I say lets have a whip around and make *The Massacre*.

"Yesterday we shot the scene where Jacqueline Hill first comes through the TARDIS, so she's outside the set coming in and on the monitors you see the shot, it was sort of close to time travel! I said to David Bradley yesterday, 'something is going to happen here, there'll be a time rift, you'll find it's 1963, and we've all got 24 hours to save President Kennedy'. It's a good idea..."

"There are lots of nods and kisses to the past," Mark says, with utter

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enormous amount of documentary stuff around it, if you want the huge picture. But to tell this, it's a very moving story about Bill's decline, and what it did to him. It made his life so completely different to how he would have imagined it, but the focus has to be on William Hartnell and Verity Lambert really."

Will the incredible recreations of scenes see the light of day elsewhere?

"We have got to record a lot of buffer stuff from the episodes because it's playing on TV's, you see a bit and then it has to carry on in the background. It's spreading and spreading," Mark grins. "I was saying last night 'do you think we could knock up all the sets from *Marco Polo* and just carry on?' It's astonishing, yesterday when it was first put through the monitors, it's like someone found all the studio footage. The look and the feel of it is absolutely uncanny.

"There will probably be a longer version and cut stuff and bits and pieces and because we're recording quite large chunks of episodes, basically

joy in his face. So expect to see cameos from a lot of the original series cast.

"I deliberately held back on seeing the TARDIS until it was finished, but I arrived on Monday and actually had to stuff my scarf in my mouth to stop screaming. It was all lit up and it was moving and it was green, peppermint green, which photographs as white, and then the junk yard next to it, and then the Daleks next to it, it was basically a map of my brain, since I was five years old."

So definitely something that's been with him forever then?

"I have a weird memory of my family doing impersonations of those fish people from *The Underwater Menace* and I do remember the white robots from *The Mind Robber*, but my first proper one is *Spearhead From Space*, which blew me away.

"It just got me and it never let me go I'm afraid. And it's alright isn't it? It's really basically a long slow revenge on my PE teacher who'd tell me it would never help..." ■

An Adventure In Space and Time is on BBC Two in November, @markgatiss