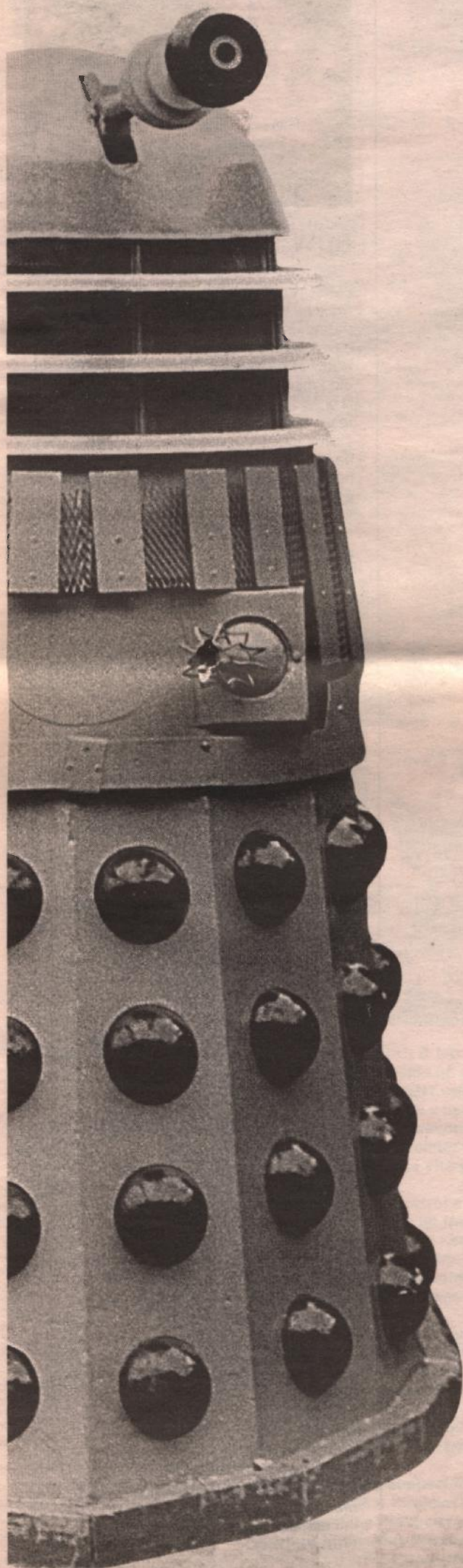


COVER STORY

# 40 YEARS ON, ANOTHER



**DUMMA-DI-DUM, DUMMA-DI-DUM, DUMMA-DI-DUM... THEN THE HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL OF THE THEME MUSIC AND YOU DIVED BEHIND THE SOFA BEFORE THE DALEKS GOT YOU. AS DOCTOR WHO RETURNS TO TV, JONATHAN RICHARDS ASKS FANS ABOUT THE ENDURING APPEAL OF THE TRAVELLING TIME LORD**

FOR 14 YEARS *Doctor Who* has been lost in the space-time continuum. Cast adrift by the Daleks in charge of the BBC in 1989, he returned briefly in a 1996 movie, but otherwise his fans have had no inkling of which galaxies or even millennia his Tardis has been navigating.

But he's on his way back. The BBC has commissioned a new series, the search for the next Doctor has begun and a new generation of children will spend Saturday nights cowering behind the sofa.

The first episode of *Doctor Who* was broadcast on November 23, 1963, the day after Kennedy's assassination, with William Hartnell playing the Time Lord. As the Doctor regenerated himself over the years, six other actors took the role. At its peak the show had a worldwide audience of more than 110 million in 60 countries. In 1996, for BBC TV's 60th anniversary, *Doctor Who* was voted the all-time favourite drama.

In truth, the most famous native of the planet Gallifrey has never really been away. During the long hiatus since the last series, more than three million *Doctor Who* videos and DVDs have been sold. The number of *Doctor Who* novels now stands at more than 100, a record for a series built around a single character, according to *The Guinness Book of Records*.

For the 40th birthday the BBC commissioned a new six-part animated series that can be viewed on their website: *Scream of the Shalka* features the voices of Richard E. Grant, Sir Derek Jacobi and Diana Quick. There is also a lavish coffee-table book, *Doctor Who: The Legend*, and a mass of further merchandise. There was a 40th anniversary *Doctor Who* convention at the London Hilton this month, and UK Gold turns much of its programming over to the Doctor this weekend.

So it is understandable that the BBC should want to tap the great well of nostalgia for the Doctor. But updating it for a 21st-century audience will not be easy. The new TV series, which won't go out until 2005, is to be written by Russell T. Davies, a fan who is best known for writing *Queer As Folk*.

**DAMIAN WHITWORTH**

REX



**TOM BAKER**  
**The Doctor, 1974-1981**

I always went for the laugh. I was shameless. I didn't have to reach to play the Doctor. I always felt myself to be some sort of benevolent alien who came from somewhere else. And I've never stopped being the Doctor.

*Doctor Who* fans are much superior human beings. A fan's love doesn't evaporate. It endures and it is blind. I don't think it's strange that people are obsessed with what made them happy when they were children. I was in Oxford Street recently and a man said to me: "Tom Baker?" I said "Yes". He said: "You know, when I was a child I was in care in North Wales. Oh, Christ, you made a bit of a difference on Saturday nights." Then he was overcome and just waved me away and walked on.

The Daleks have got to come back, that's definite. I would like to be brought back too, but not as the Doctor. It would be terribly, terribly funny if they brought me back as the Master.

**ALAIN DE BOTTON**  
**Author and commentator**

I was utterly mystified by *Doctor Who*. I grew up in Switzerland, and when I came to prep school in the UK, aged eight, the programme was a subject of much fascination among my schoolmates. My English wasn't that good at the time. Who was this *Doctor Who*? Where was he from? All the boys watched it together in the television room, so I couldn't choose to watch anything else. The experience was as mysterious as learning Latin: I never understood what was going on. But I found it a frightening and depressing programme. It portrayed an unattractive vision of life, and I simply couldn't understand the obsession with it. *Doctor Who* came to sum up something of my feelings of being left out. Its popularity confirmed my feeling that I had landed among barbarians.

**JOAN BAKEWELL**  
**Author and broadcaster**

I was a big fan in the Tom Baker days. I had young kids then and I remember us all being completely entranced. It was a completely new

You can trust us, we're Doctors: from left, Peter Davison, Tom Baker, Jon Pertwee and Patrick Troughton



**TIMELESS...**

● There have been seven TV Doctors: William Hartnell (1963-1966), Patrick Troughton (until 1969), Jon Pertwee (until 1974), Tom Baker (until 1981), Peter Davison (until 1984), Colin Baker (until 1986) and Sylvester McCoy (1989).

● The Doctor is a Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey with the power to regenerate. He has two hearts and a body temperature of 60F.

● The first episode was produced by 27-year-old Verity Lambert, later a top drama producer.

● The long scarf first worn by Tom Baker was the result of a knitter thinking that she had to use all the wool she had been given.

● There is a *Doctor Who* monster for every letter from Aggedor to Zygon.

● The Tardis changes shape to fit its environment, but it became stuck as a police box after landing in a junkyard. The Doctor could not fix the mechanism.

● Actors in the series include Lynda Bellingham, Nicholas Parsons, Honor Blackman, John Cleese, Martin Clunes, Leslie Grantham, Bonnie Langford, Rula Lenska, Kate O'Mara, Alexei Sayle and Ken Dodd.





# DOCTOR...BUT WHO?

RONALD GRANT

approach to children's entertainment: scary, thrilling, witty and well written. The jargon even made its way into popular speech: Dennis Potter at one stage referred to John Birt as "a croak-voiced Dalek", a huge put-down.

## MARK GATISS

### Comedian

I absolutely love *Doctor Who*, and have done since I was small and used to hide behind the couch when the shop window dummies came alive. It was the first TV show I remember and I was hooked from the start. When it's treated properly, it's the perfect TV programme: witty, scary, odd, distinctive and exciting. It's true family viewing, working on many different levels. I would love to be the Doctor myself and perhaps, if this new series takes off, I'll apply 20 years down the line. But I think the smart money is on Bill Nighy.

## VICTORIA HERVEY

### Socialite

Was it Rowan Atkinson who played him? I can't remember. I wasn't a huge fan, but I remember it was popular with some people at my prep school. I just never really liked science fiction. The music was cool, though.

## JULIE BURCHILL

### Journalist

I love it. My favourite Doctor was Patrick Troughton, but that just shows how old I am. I was always a bit scared of Jon Pertwee, he looked like a bit of a pervert. But I'm glad it's coming back, and I hope Alan Davies gets to play him because he's so sexy.

## BORIS JOHNSON

### MP and Journalist

I think it's brilliant. When I was a nipper it was played by a chap called Tom Baker, and the whole thing was absolutely terrifying. I was particularly frightened of the Seamonsters. But frankly I couldn't give a monkey's who will play him this time. They could get General Pinochet in, he'd make a rather good Doctor. Norman Lamont would be excellent too, he's got the right sort of quizzical eyebrows.

## JOHN SESSIONS

### Actor and comedian

I'm excited about it coming back on, especially if Bill Nighy plays him. I used to watch the show when I was very young, and my generation saw all the early ones with William Hartnell and Patrick Troughton, before Colin or Tom Baker came along. The Doctor should be crotchety and bad-tempered. He's not the trendy uncle type, or the parent who goes into their teenager's bedroom and recognises all the rap records. He's a reactionary, hates his ability to travel in time, and hates the future like all decent old people.

## DERREN BROWN

### Illusionist

I used to love it when I was younger, I'd watch it all the time, hiding behind the couch. I'm very excited about the possibility of Eddie Izzard playing him as I'm a huge fan. I think it will definitely get a lot of people watching, anyway.

## PAUL CORNELL

### Author of *Scream of the Shalka*, the BBC's web animation *Doctor Who* series

The show's appeal lies in its blend of the wonderfully silly and the wonderfully serious. It was enjoyed by the whole family, especially with Tom Baker, who as an adult you realise is some kind of comic genius but as a kid you thought was just this really clever, resourceful hero.

**What are your memories of *Doctor Who*, and who should play the new Doctor? E-mail debate@thetimes.co.uk**

## OUR INNER CHILD

IT would be hard to explain to someone who never saw *Doctor Who* in childhood why it had such a phenomenal grip on us as kiddies. It's easily forgotten that in 1963 there only were two channels and very, very little of the output was directed at the five to 15-year-olds who lapped the show up.

How do you describe what it was like as a child to sense the sexual chemistry between the Doc and his assistant? How to convey the fascination and menace of the words "We are the Da-leks. Ex-ter-min-ate, ex-ter-min-ate", uttered in an easily imitated, frighteningly neutral, alienated electronic buzz?

Be that as it may, while for most of us the show remains a rare pearl (along with *Blue Peter* and *Top of the Pops*) in what seemed a televisual bucket of pigswill, few would actually want to see a new series or revisit the old ones. Thanks for the memories, but let sleeping Daleks lie.

Yet there is a tiny coterie of adults whose juices are overflowing at the very thought of seeing more. As far as I know there are no scientific studies of this cult's psychology but there are of the causes of nostalgia. The scientific journal *Psychology and Marketing* (April 2003) presented evidence that we do indeed tend to be nostalgic for songs, films, movie stars and fashion trends according to the age at which we consumed them. For example, in a sample of 16 to 80-year-olds, songs that were popular after the age of 18 or before pubescence have the least nostalgic impact.

Liking for movie stars peaks at 14 and for films at 27. Like ducks who bond with the first thing they see on being born, there appear to be critical periods for developing nostalgia hunger. But there were also substantial variations in proneness to nostalgia — the more prone, the earlier the preferred product memories. Applied to the Who-nerds, this could be explained as follows: that their childhoods were more than averagely lonely, neglected or abusive.

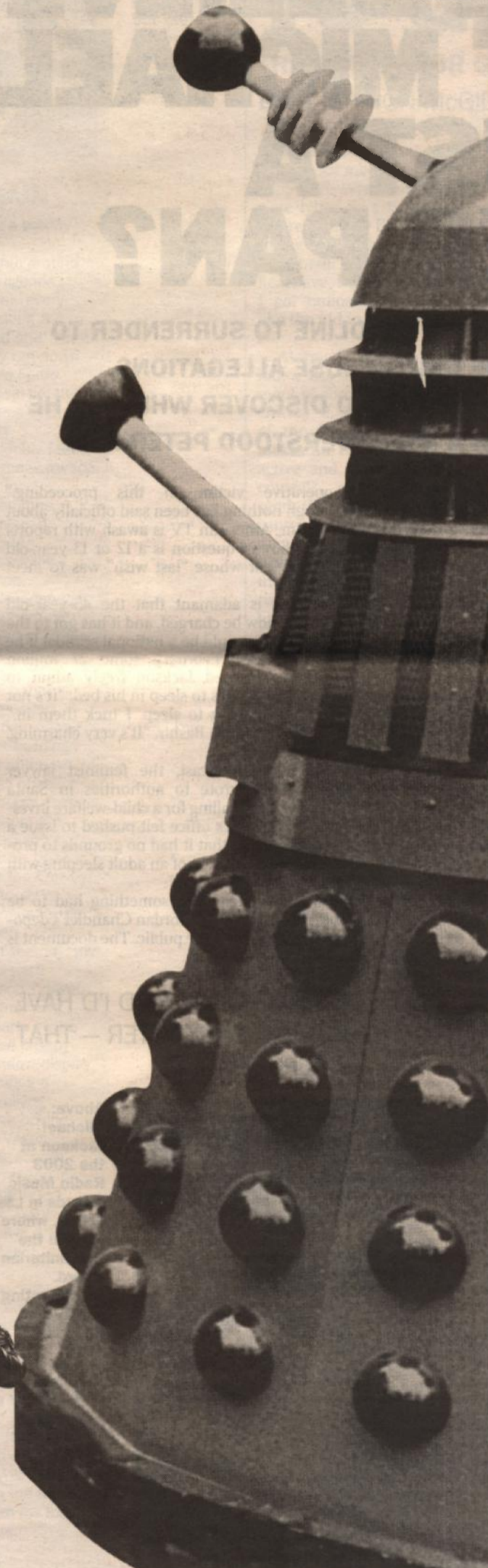
For such children, the menacing world of the Daleks may have expressed their fears closer to home. Becoming part of an alternative world in which the threat to the Doctor was invariably given a happy ending (exit via the handy time-travelling Tardis) would have been deeply pleasing.

As adults, doubtless some of them would not want to be reminded of the show because they want nothing to do with that time in their life. But for the cult followers it may be that nostalgia for it gives them at least one positive and reliable memory to cling on to from the maltreated wreckage of their childhood.

Not that I wouldn't mind seeing just one of the old shows again ...

## OLIVER JAMES

*They F\*\*\* You Up: How to Survive Family Life*, by Oliver James, is published by Bloomsbury (£7.99)



## THE ETHICIST



Each Friday we run responses from T2 readers to the daily ethical dilemmas posed in this column, and your reactions to Randy Cohen's solutions.

**I overheard a barrister reporting back to chambers via a mobile phone on a crowded train. Some passengers might have known the people involved. What should I have done?**

When overcome by a yammering twit why not seek the help of fellow passengers by encouraging them to join you in a rendition of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* or *You'll Never Walk Alone* — at least one fellow sufferer will know the words — and this should force the loudmouth to put the phone away. Be prepared to do a solo.

**Hugh Doherty, via e-mail**

**A repairman offered me a VAT discount if I paid cash. Should I go along with this?**

Pay him cash but deduct £30 for income tax, pointing out to him cheerfully that you are following his example of deducting tax (VAT) from the bill.

**Francis Harvey, via e-mail**

**I am a doctor. An elderly patient expressed anti-American sentiments on September 12, 2001, and I was so angered that I referred him to another physician. Was I wrong?**

Your refusal to allow the patient the benefit of your medical knowledge simply because he has angered you is childish and hypocritical. You have demonstrated nothing more than the same shortsighted desire to retaliate that was the source of your initial anger.

**Stephen Foulks and Hyuwyll Fayed, via e-mail**

**I used to feed a stray dog that was kept in an immigrant family's backyard. When she went missing they showed little concern. Eventually I took her to my house in the country. Was this stealing?**

You say that this dog was a stray and that she lived in the family's backyard ... Surely a dog cannot both be a stray and have somewhere to live! The dog probably prefers living in the country, and the animal's welfare is the most important ethical issue, but it looks like you did steal her.

**Nicola Collins, Leeds**





21.11.03

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