



Treasure and terror

The Doctor and the gang take on pirates and sea monsters in a swashbuckling new adventure

NEW SCI-FI

Doctor Who

Easter Sunday, 7.10pm, BBC1

From Autons and Sontarans to Daleks and Zygons, the classic era of *Doctor Who* gave rise to many memorable monsters that have since been revived to great effect in the rebooted series.

Now it's the turn of the Sea Devils to return to the 'Whoniverse', after an absence of almost 40 years, in Easter Sunday's new one-off adventure *Legend of the Sea Devils*.

Last appearing in 1984 (see panel, right), the Sea Devils are amphibious creatures who occupied the Earth before humans existed. This week, we see them causing chaos on the high seas in 19th-century China, where the Doctor (Jodie Whittaker), Yaz (Mandip Gill) and Dan (John Bishop) have landed during a slightly botched attempt to solve the mystery of the treasure of the ship *Flor de la Mar*.

In addition to the Doctor's sub-aquatic enemies, the episode also sees the TARDIS team coming up against a band of pirates – led by the real-life historical figure of Madam Ching (Crystal Yu).

Here, Whittaker, 39, and Bishop, 55, reveal what's in store in this all-action adventure...

What can viewers expect from *Legend of the Sea Devils*?

Whittaker We're a few centuries off where the Doctor was aiming for, and the gang stumble across a period in history that is a first for

the *Doctor Who* universe. The TARDIS knows that it's going to China, so Yaz and the Doctor have prepared appropriately, but Dan gets a bit of a bum steer and his costume is all wrong!

Bishop It starts out as a little joke between Yaz and Dan, then events take over and he never gets the chance to change his clothes.

Jodie, how did you find playing opposite the Sea Devils, with Craigie Els playing their chief?

Whittaker I was really pleased to be working with the Sea Devils. It's interesting to see Craigie's interpretation, because he's playing a very different kind of Sea Devil than we've seen before. The costume, and the restrictions of the mask, meant that Craigie's lines were recorded – it must have been so challenging, but he brought an incredible characterisation.

What can you tell us about Madam Ching?

Whittaker Madam Ching is such a great character and Crystal was absolutely brilliant. She was never tired – she was running around, jumping, swinging off things, fighting, memorising lots of lines and at no point did she ever stop smiling. She's a wonderful person to have on set.

Bishop Crystal was familiar with Cardiff because she has been in *Casualty*, which is filmed here, too. She said when she was on the *Casualty* set, she used to think about what it was like in the *Doctor Who* studio on the other side of the wall.

The set looks very impressive. What was it like to work on?

Whittaker It was amazing. The art department worked night and day to create a really extraordinary set, and I think it's the biggest one that we've worked on. It had so many different levels, it was really epic.

Bishop I just couldn't believe it – it was a full ship, built in the studio next door to the TARDIS. The workmanship and detail in it absolutely floored me.

Yaz has seemed to develop feelings for the Doctor. How has that affected things?

Bishop I think it was probably a surprise to both the Doctor and Yaz that it was so obvious to Dan that there were feelings between them. As a character, Dan is probably not the most obvious person to be the matchmaker, but the bond between them is so clear. As he said to Yaz in the New Year's special, sometimes if you've got feelings for somebody, you just have to act on them because otherwise it will be too late.

We hear you get to do some sword-fighting in this episode...

Whittaker I was really nervous, as I hadn't done it since drama school. But when we ended up rehearsing it, it was just like choreographing a dance, and I really enjoyed it.

Bishop I was so desperate to do a few somersaults and swing on ropes – I really wanted to be a proper pirate! But I would have killed myself at some point. I was like a kid on set, climbing up ropes – the stunt coordinator kept saying, 'Get off!'

PLAYING THE DEVIL

The first appearance of the Sea Devils in *Doctor Who* was in 1972, when they were introduced as an amphibious sub-species of the Silurians. They returned in 1984's *Warriors of the Deep*, fighting alongside the Silurians in a Cold War allegory where Peter Davison's Doctor had to avert a nuclear apocalypse.

Showrunner Chris Chibnall was keen not to deviate too far from the Devils' established look, created in the 1970s by designer John Friedlander.

'We felt we could fit that original, brilliant design into our story, but have it updated by Robert Allsopp and Ray Holman, our costume and monster designers,' says Chibnall. 'We could have a bit of fun, and pirate them up a bit.'



WORDS: STEVEN PERKINS PHOTOS: BBC



The fearsome Sea Devils