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'It took Mike saving grace Belgrave & his punchy
bold jokes to properly energise this crowd'
Three Weeks

Spoilers Sweetie

The blog of stand up comedian and
self confessed Doctor Who addict
BY

Mike Belgrave
Vol 1

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Michael gives us his views on recent Doctor Who. It's great fun, very different from other Doctor Who commentaries and cliché free. It scales new heights of excellence when I get a mention - and is thus worth reading for that alone.

Brian Gallagher, contributor to the Doctor Who podcast [The Flashing Blade](#)

Introduction

If you're reading this introduction then you have probably downloaded this eBook for free and will be reading it either on a computer or a portable electronic device. You may have even been crazy enough to have had it printed professionally into a leather bound hardback as you read it in your veranda with a half naked butler pouring gin and tonic into your cake hole. I very much doubt this has happened but if it has, see me at a gig and I'll sign it for you in a bodily fluid of my choosing.

I'm a massive fan of reading books on my iPhone and have read more books in the last year than I have probably read since I was bored one summer holiday with nothing else to do apart from hang out with friends on the street and read comics and books. A lot of the books I read that year were Doctor Who Target novelisations. With the lack of repeats, no video recorders being available and only one episode a week on a Saturday night, I was desperate to know the stories I vaguely remember as a toddler or had never seen before. So it's quite fitting that I write up my blog and publish them as an eBook for the voracious reader on the go. Or on the not go as I was back then.

So why an eBook of my blog? Well the answers quite easy. First of all I used to make comments about episodes of Doctor Who on Facebook and an army of friends used to reply and add silly comments. Then when Elisabeth Sladen passed away I wrote my immediate feelings on my general blog and some of the messages I received from friends were most heartfelt.

And then the new series started and I was so excited. So much I felt like a little kid again. So I wrote about it and found as each episode came up I was getting more and more readers. At first friends but gradually I got the odd email from strangers. Then passing people I met at gigs would contradict me on facebook and I realised that I could just put the whole damn thing together and release it as a free eBook to coincide with my 2011 Edinburgh show *Down and Out*.

So I won't go on forever I'll just let you get on with reading the blog entries. I just wanted to write this because books have intros don't they. And here's an intro from you so you can feel a bit special. This isn't on the blog, it's just here for you.

The entries you read are in order of how they were uploaded onto my blog. They weren't necessarily written in that order, but I updated them as I went along so they would make some sort of sense I hope.

I have also included worthy comments from friends and readers, those are the bits in italics.

Enjoy and keep checking www.mikebelgrave.com/doctorwho for the next volume.

RIP Elisabeth Sladen

I've just found out Elisabeth Sladen has died. How very very sad and upsetting. I think I can speak for many people and say I knew of her from little else apart from *Doctor Who*, but what a legacy to have left. She was more than just a Doctor Who assistant; she was the assistant everyone loved. She was an assistant for possibly the most exciting periods of Doctor Who. From the end of John Pertwee to the most entertaining, highly watched and brilliantly written first half of Tom Baker's reign.

When she was brought back for the episode *School Reunion* it was like having an old friend revisit. I loved the scene where Rose was clearly jealous about the Doctor and Sarah Jane catching up and getting on like house on fire. I'm sure when Billie Piper was told the most popular ever assistant in the entire history of the programme was going to make a one off appearance; there was a hint of realism in her jealous performance creeping through. And who can blame her? I'd feel the same too. She was that popular.

Just how popular was she? Well she's the only character to get a stab at her own TV series. Twice. *K9 and Company* was a bit ropey, but the *Sarah Jane Adventures* were wonderful. It's how children's TV should be. There's an adult the kids can look up to, it's scary, exciting, not patronising and most importantly something the whole family can watch together.

I feel like an old friend has passed away and I never forget her leaving in the final episode of *The Hand of Fear*. When I watched it many years later, the final scene where the Doctor leaves her nowhere near South Croydon was a bittersweet ending that embedded in my memory. A kind of laugh or you'll cry moment.

This reminds me of the time Lux Interior passed away. I was under the impression both of them would outlive me. It seems that not many people knew she had cancer. She didn't want to bother us with these trifles and keep us happy.

RIP Lis

1 February 1946 – 19 April 2011

Dave Parton wrote

I was shocked as well. Just out of the blue and a waste of such a warm, enriching person, it hit me for six – losing such an important part of my childhood so unexpectedly. She seemed to bring light to everyone who knew her. It's just a shame that she seemed to be totally neglected by TV for so long.

Doctor Who S06E01 The Impossible Astronaut

Doctor Who is possibly the only program I ever get seriously excited about. Since they've brought it back I've been like a school kid again and unashamedly so. As luck would have it, for the first time in ages I didn't have a gig on Saturday, so I actually got to watch it as it came out live and broadcasted and as god intended.

So how did I find the first episode of the sixth series? A little disappointing I'm afraid. In fact it's possible this is the weakest opening episode so far. Saying that, it's only the first part so it may kick in next week in such a way that makes part one a lot better on second viewing. It wouldn't be the first time. There has been the odd ropery episode that ends up being integral to something later and suddenly that episode becomes a lot more fun in hindsight. *The Lazarus Experiment* springs to mind.

I know it was suppose to be a massive shock at the start of the episode, but I was disappointed with the bluff of the Doctor being shot, about to regenerate and then getting killed in the middle of his regeneration. There was a similar bluff in the penultimate episode of David Tennent's *The Stolen Earth* and that didn't excite me either.

The plot itself wasn't bad once you got over the silly is he/isn't he dead nonsense. The idea of the aliens that you forget the minute you stop looking at them is fantastic idea, if a little similar to the Weeping Angels from *Blink*. And even though they're supposed to look a bit like Edvard Munch's *Scream*, I can't help feel they're more like an amalgamation of Greys and the *Ood*. All in all it gave me a slight feeling of, I've seen this all before.

I was also a little disappointed with the use of River Song. I would go out of my way and say that she is the best character since they brought the series back. The casting of Alex Kinston is spot on and I've loved her as an actor since *Moll Flanders*. I wouldn't be surprised if Moffat didn't just create the character especially for her. But in this episode I really can't see what she was there for apart from a bit of expertise and some saucy flirting. Or is it just a cynical plot to get people like me excited about the first episode. Is River Song the new Daleks? Perhaps, but I would have been excited if it was *Nimon vs The Candyman* and penned by Richard Curtis.

I also couldn't understand the point of explaining River Song and the Doctor's meetings. I was always under the impression that they were meeting at random points in their lives and this is why they compared diaries. Her explaining that they meet in reverse order meant that they would have a good idea at what point they were. By simply knowing that each time they met, the other wouldn't remember the last adventure the next time. And if this is the case why is she so joking and light hearted when the doctor meets her for the first time in *Silence in the Library*? Surely she'd be more upset knowing this would be the last time she ever see him again. Perhaps I'm getting a bit too geeky over this and have read into it wrong, but I checked again and this does seem to be the case.

Also when Pond told the Doctor she was pregnant, did we care? Seriously? Wasn't that part of the whole getting married plan? Don't kids normally come next? Obviously this is going to have significance later in the arc, but let's hope it's not an overused "chosen child" that saves the whole universe crap. If it is this significant, then they went about in a shoe horned lack lustre way.

Actually I don't know why I'm being so down on it. From what I saw on the other channels later it was the best written, acted and intelligent thing on Saturday night. There were a few nice touches that I enjoyed, like when they burned the Doctor's

body. Not wanting to leave a cell behind. This goes back to the reason why the Master was burned.

And of course there was the sauciness which I'm a sucker for (not like you filthy hound). Seeing the Doctor naked under the ladies dress, addressing River Song as that "bad bad girl" and her exclaiming that she's "good at screaming" added a much needed touch of *Carry On* to bit of a confusing first episode.

It was also a nice touch to film some of the scenes in America, however as it's *Doctor Who* and British I just assumed it was Camber Sands with a big rock superimposed in the background.

I'm just hoping this is the start of an absolutely amazing story arc that spreads throughout the whole sixth series and I'll re-read this and think maybe I shouldn't have been so judgmental.

I generally found it a little weird that Moffat wanted to appeal to the diehard Doctor Who fans from the off. If you were a casual viewer you would certainly be confused and possibly switch over. Even as a diehard fan I missed a crucial point. It wasn't till I actually read a review of this episode that I realised there was a connection between this and episode 11 from the 5th series called *The Lodger*. If you missed it, the spaceship River Song and Rory discover towards the end of the episode is the same in the both episodes. In fact, in *The Lodger*, they explain its someone's attempt at a TARDIS. Which prompted me to go back and watch *The Lodger* again and to be honest it's a much better story. Here's hoping things pick up.

6 out of 10

Doctor Who S05E11 The Lodger

Every year I'm the same when there's a new series of Doctor Who. When I start watching the new episodes and find myself needing to watch the old episodes like an important palaeontologist that's just discovered Tyrannosaurus Rex was really a herbivore and the clues were there all along.

So as I wrote my blog for *The Impossible Astronaut* I felt the need to go back and watch *The Lodger*. Now I know there were many grumblings about the fifth series before it started. A new younger Doctor barely anyone had heard of? Richard (*Boat that was Crap*) Curtis penning and episode? Matthew Corden being cast in an episode? Was Moffat deliberately being provocative? Perhaps, but any fan of his work was easily going to give him the benefit of the doubt and expect brilliant things. And as Meatloaf sang, *Two Outta Three Ain't Bad*. Matt Smith is a superb Doctor, Mathew Corden was great in *The Lodger*, but I shall leave my hatred of the Richard Curtis's dull, pointless and weepy episode for another blog entry.

Matthew Corden came under a bit of flack near the time of the episode because he was simply due for a backlash. I tend not to try and go with public opinion as public opinion tends to come from of one or two people in the media saying what's hot and what's not. I liked *Gavin and Stacey* a lot. I thought it was a lovely show that was consciously lacking cynicism. And even though *The Horne and Corden* sketch show was hit and miss there was no deny that their performances in the sketches were

excellent and that the show was obviously a success when they went on tour and should have been confined to a live DVD rather than a television show. Corden was also excellent as the drummer Clem Clattini in hugely underrated *Teletar* about the life and times of the pop pioneer Joe Meek, so I couldn't see why he wouldn't be fantastic in this.

I liked *The Lodger* loads when I first saw it and enjoyed it even more the second time round. Because the first time there was the romance, comedy between Matt and Matthew and the creepy sci-fi story to enjoy. The second time had the whole added fun of knowing this was just a prequel to a bigger story. I also wanted to watch it to see if there were clues to *The Impossible Astronaut*.

This episode kicks off great. Right at the start the Doctor is separated from Pond and there's a creepy scene with the man from the street being lured upstairs into a house. As we know this is Doctor Who and not The Diary of Joe Orton so this is going to be something deadly and not a seedy fumble with a hairy bin man.

Then we're introduced to Craig (Corden) and he is already downplaying the kind of acting the public have suddenly hated him for and simply gives a nice levelled warm character for us to enjoy. As I mentioned earlier, I didn't really have a problem with him anyway and was under the impression he'd love to be on Doctor Who and not bugger it up by getting his belly out and shaking it. To round off the fantastic main cast we also have the character of Sophie played by Daisy Haggard who is a great actor in *Life on Mars* and livens up her scenes in *Episodes*.

The comedy in *The Lodger* is probably the best so far in the new series. There's so much fun from the Doctor not understanding stuff. Like when to kiss on both cheeks, not knowing that a normal screwdriver doesn't have a switch and even mistaking football as "the one with the sticks". All through it I can't tell if the Doctor's going senile (he is about 900 by now) or if he's just having fun freaking people out. Saying that, if you went from planet to planet and lived that long, you couldn't possibly remember the rules of every sport you come across. Even though I've had it explained to me over and over again, I still don't know (but more importantly don't care) about the offside rule in tennis.

The chemistry between Corden and Smith is amazing. Their playful banter is such good fun at times you kind of forget there's a bigger picture going on. It's a bit like the episode *Rose*, the back story takes importance over the whole planet being destroyed. I like episodes like this where they keep the sets down to a minimum and just let the script and the acting do all the work. In the old days that would mean a bad episode (*The Edge of Destruction* or *Spock's Brain*). But now it can mean one of the best of the series. Take the episode of *Psychoville* all done in one take, actually it was two because the battery couldn't last the whole half hour. This was the cheap episode, yet it was clearly everyone's favourite.

I'm not a fan of football in the slightest, yet I loved the football match sequence. It was actually quite exciting as Matt Smith was clearly enjoying himself on the pitch scoring goal after goal. And then we're brought back to the reason why the Doctor's here. Straight after the fun of the match we see a lone woman lured into the house to meet what another vile and grisly end. In a way I don't care about her. Let's just watch

the Doctor have a day off with his funny new friend for a whole episode. I even enjoyed the burgeoning romance between Craig and Sophie. It was quite corny but really sweet. There was even a nod to the "not liking wine moment" in *The Impossible Astronaut* where he spits wine out while fiddling with wires. Even when they had to move the plot forward they used the first kiss of Sophie and Craig to save the day. Call me an old romantic but this episode was absolutely lovely and not a moment was wasted dragging things out. I think I'm in that soppy frame of mind at the moment. I just finished reading *One Dave* by David Nicholls and almost cried on the bus.

The main wonderfully creepy thing about watching this *The Lodger* is knowing what happens in *The Impossible Astronaut*. Did they constantly have contact with *The Silence* but simply kept forgetting? Maybe we'll find out that perhaps the spaceship wasn't deserted after all. And that gives this episode even more weight than it had before. Watch it and keep that thought in your head. You'll poo your pants.

8 out of 10

Doctor Who S06E02 Day of the Moon

Right. I've really thrown myself into my Doctor Who since *The Impossible Astronaut*, which is actually paying off because I haven't had so many readers for a blog entry in all years I've been writing blogs. The replies have been mainly positive and most agreed with what I had to say about the plot being a tad complex, apart from Alex Marion who was showing off his inner geek. Nothing to be proud of son.

So twice in a row I managed to see the episode as they came out on the TV as normal people get to see them on a normal Saturday Night. Like the villains in Doctor Who, this is alien to me. My gig didn't start till 8pm and I knew I could get to my gig by 7.30 as long as I had my boots on and my crap packed ready to go. This included the suit bag, matching shirt and tie combo and cufflinks loaned to me by Mike Manera for my wedding. I also got out a pork goulash and rice from the freezer and stuck a few sausages under grill to make sure I had a proper meal in me, rather than buying something overpriced and full of fat and salt later. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure after a few pints the fast food would taste divine, but I know in the long run eating the sensible way is the healthier and cheaper option in this uncertain economic climate. Even if there were sausages on the menu. Anyway I digest. Ha, see what I did there. Oh please yourselves. No, not like that, put it away.

Well, once the sausages go down I will have to eat my hat with *The Impossible Astronaut*. As much as I found it confusing and a little lacklustre in places, it turns out it was just the first half of a brilliant opening story for the new series. I think Moffat must have read my blog about the landscape not really looking like America because in this episode there's no mistaking the place. You don't get that kind of scenery on Peckham Rye with a bit of Photoshop thrown in. Some of the sweeping scenes were breathtaking and is it me, but I can't get used to the proper American accents. I'm so used to British TV having RADA types doing a dodgy New York or Texan drawl. Doctor Who is finally going global. Talking of dodgy accents, in series one there was plenty of people who went to the Dick Van Dyke school of old London cockney. But that's for another blog entry.

I know it's corny but it's a great use of Area 51 and the Doctor is being treated how they would treat any alien they'd find. With fear, chained up and armed men all around. Speaking of which, one of the armed men was fellow comedian Tommy Campbell. He told me he was going to be in an episode but couldn't say what happens. I told him I didn't want to know anyway because the surprise would be more fun. And there he was with a big gun in his hand. Good man. My wife said to me, "Where have I seen him before?" Thinking he must be in Eastenders or something. I pointed out he was at a gig she went to a few weeks ago with her parents. I don't think they were too impressed with "Dick Fan" material. Oh and the Doctor has been there so long he has a beard. Beards are cool. Trust me, they are. No they really are.

I don't know about you but I thought the markings on the bodies would have had something to do with *The Impossible Planet* and *Satan's Pit* but those were just weird squiggles and these are bars of five drawn on the body. Damn you Moffat for making me see more than what's there. The fact that both of the episodes have the word Impossible in them makes it all little more tasty and I won't rule out a connection just yet.

River Song oh how I love you River Song. Such bare faced cheek of the woman. Jumping off a building on the off chance that Canton will tell the Doctor, so he would go back in time to save her is brilliant to say the least. Only five minutes into the episode and I'm giddy with happiness and full of pork. And how good was the flirting between the Doctor and River, much to the annoyance of Amy? Pissed off or jealous? Who knows? Tee hee, it's more fun than an episode of Hollyoaks. Alright, crap analogy.

The children's home was nice creepy touch. The crazy old guy writing on the walls but thinking it's the children. And how odd The Silence want to make sure the little girl is looked after properly albeit in a weird way. I loved the scene when Canton shot The Silence. I'm tired of seeing films where these ancient monsters are invincible against modern weaponry. Play any computer game especially *Castle Wolfenstein* and you'll see human weapons can put pink frilly knickers on any monster then spank it's arse and call it Judy.

Now rethinking *The Lodger* I can now see that the spaceship in the flat is abandoned due to the fact that the human race has killed off The Silence. So that makes the story in *The Lodger* an old remnant from times long gone. So as I get my head around it, *The Lodger* is a prelude that takes place after the event of the main story. Very cool Mr Moffat. I should never have doubted you.

So here's the big question. Who the little girl? Were The Silence trying to make a Timelord? Did they find one? But shouldn't the Doctor be able to sense if there's another Timelord in the universe? Rani? River Song? Romana? They all begin with R. Are they all one and the same? Or it could just obviously be Amy's baby? But when the Doctor checks to see if she's pregnant even the TARDIS can't make its mind. The whole pregnancy thing seemed to have different connotations this time round. It's obvious that she wants a bit of Timelord sausage, but have they done the beast with two backs? Did he give her one in the future and doesn't know about it yet? The filthy hound.

I'm also warming to the Doctor and River Song meeting in reverse order. That was sad when she realized they'd never kiss again. She looked like she was still in the throws of nastiness. Maybe it's their child. Perhaps the Doctor will repopulate the Timelord race with his loins. And who can blame him, how sexy was she when she spun around killing The Silence? How sexy was she drying her wet self down with a towel? It certainly gave me a semi. However I have to admit I'm a little unsure as to why The Silence are such a threat, I mean yes they're everywhere and that means they see you have a poo and they gawp as you get aroused by the shower section in the Argos catalogue, but apart from acute embarrassment is that a crime? Well yes, being a peeping tom is a crime, but it's hardly Third Reich stuff. I'm sure we'll find out by the end of the series.

There were also a few flashbacks of series 5 and who was that woman with the eye patch? It was like Amy was asleep and that was her way of seeing a medical person checking on her. I blame *Lost* for this kind of thing. Let's answer some questions and leave a shed load to ponder over. I think in viewing figure this won't be a hugely successful series as it will be getting too complex to tune in halfway through, but it could be the most artistically rewarding for fans.

My last thought. If you're going to keep a written tally of anything, isn't it a bit pointless to write on your face?

Next week it's pirates. Ah har!

8 out of 10

Doctor Who Comic Relief Special 2011

Now here's something that slipped me by, *Space and Time*, the recent Comic Relief special. Given what I do for a living you would think I'd have a vague inkling there would be an episode of my favourite program (after *Come Dine with Me* and *Snog Marry Avoid* of course) on a show called "Comic" Relief. I really do love the specials as they work perfectly as a little link between one series finishing and the other starting. I have fond memories of showing *Time Crash* the special with David Tennant and Peter Davidson to my good friend Bethany Black in a Birmingham hotel before we went to see Marylyn Manson. To be honest, that was the highlight of the evening.

This basically is the same kind of thing, but just on Comic Relief and boy is it great. In fact, it's the best special so far. There was a movie a while back called *New York Stories* that had short films made by Woody Allen, Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola. A friend of mine described the Woody Allen short as, "a little gem" and this is how I would describe this fun little romp. A little gem. Moffat must have had fun writing it and the cast must have had fun performing it AND it was FUNNY. Sometimes Comic Relief can be lacking in humour and I'm not talking about the footage from Africa. Some of the performances can be more embarrassing than watching yourself drunk on YouTube snogging your best mate. Apparently.

The story is simple enough, Rory doesn't pay attention while helping to fix the TARDIS because he's too busy looking up Amy's skirt and who can blame him? Not me (here's hoping the wife doesn't read this). The TARDIS then appears inside itself just a few minutes into the future, then there's the slightly 'in the future' characters running in and out of the two TARDISs explaining to the slightly 'in the past' characters what they have to do to get out of this predicament. In fact it's all such a good idea it would make the basis for a full episode. It's a much better idea than a blind giant chicken stuck in a church for half an hour. Anyway, this vignette shows that you don't have to do the bare minimum "for charity". You can still pull out the stops and make an old cynic like me consider getting his credit card out for a good cause.

The dialogue's great, it's well acted, well directed, it's funny and a bit saucy. Where's me credit card, I feel a pledge coming on.

Doctor Who S06E03 The Curse of the Black Spot

So the bastard BBC decided to put this week's Doctor Who on 15 minutes later than usual so the tiny window I previously had for actually getting to watch it live as it goes out got too small even for me to be comfortable with. So now I have to wait till I get home and hope it's on iplayer. To make matters worse this is a pirate episode. Set on a pirate. With pirates and everything. I love pirates me. All through my adulthood I've enjoyed a romp with a pirate. I mean a pirate romp. When I got 100% for my animation module at uni it was my pirate cartoon that sealed the deal. And when someone suggested I should have a pirate wedding I thought it was the best idea since my dad let me as a baby dip my finger into a pint of Guinness giving me a lifelong taste and love of alcohol. But I know it wouldn't be worth mentioning to the wife. She flatly said no when I asked if our first dance could be BJ Snowden's In Canada.

So I had a lovely gig that night and was on the bill with Tommy Campbell who was on last week's episode Day of the Moon and is an awesome comedian. Like a fan boy I got my photo taken with him to show I don't just make this crap up. Angus the guy that works the door took the photo and because he's a camera man and a perfectionist he kept saying, "can we take one more?" till there was a queue of people waiting to get back into the gig as the sign was in the hallway back into the room of mirth.



After the show I had a beer with Tommy and Mike Manera and Tommy told us a bit about the filming and how he's already been stopped in the street and has been sent things to sign. It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy and then we sat talking about married life. I got home a little late, was tired and had a few beers in me so I decided to watch it the next day as I had an early start.

Did I get a chance to watch it on Sunday? Did I Frak. I had to cook Sunday dinner round my mums. Roast beef dinner actually and it was most excellent if I say so myself. Then after dropping my brother off I had to go home, pick up my ukulele and head to a gig to try out some stuff for my Edinburgh show. By the time Sophia met me and had a drink I was again too tired to watch it and give the episode my undivided attention.

Monday came and I was given a list of things to do by the wife. The minute she went out of the door I sat down at the computer with a pot of coffee and a steak pie with baked beans and finally got around to watching episode 3. Thank god for that, I was about to explode with a yo ho ho.

Doctor Who meets Pirates of the Caribbean. What could be better? Instead of Curse of the Black Pearl, this was Curse of the Black Spot. This episode was fun fun fun. After all the seriousness and confusing plotlines from the last two episodes it's great to have a traditional Saturday night family Doctor Who.

I adored the way the Doctor wanted the pirates to be more like pirates you see in movies and getting them to laugh more. His bantering with Captain Avery about who was in charge was fun and Avery knowing rudimentary knowledge of how the

TARDIS works because one ship is fairly similar to another was a great plot device to be used later. Amy looked sexy in her pirate outfit and the special effects for the siren and the look of the set were fantastic. John Avery going off into space was a nice way to explain what happened to him after he disappeared in real life. As far as I know he finished pirating and disappeared with a ton of loot never to be heard of again.

However there were a lot of problems. Overall it was an overused plot device. People disappearing with an abandoned computer still running its program is basically the same plot as *The Lodger*.

Avery flying off to new adventure with his newly acquired spaceship is a little bit too much like the ending of *The Doctor's Daughter*. I got the impression with both stories it was a blatant attempt to start a spin off series or be a plot device to come and save the day during the final episode.

It's a little uncomfortable that they made Avery a nice pirate as he and his crew were anything but in real life. He never served for the navy and he and his crew took great pleasure in killing, torture and rape on a horrific scale.

Also can we not have Rory dying and not dying, he's starting to become the Doctor Who equivalent of Kenny from *South Park*.

The Siren was a lovely idea and really well performed, but to simply have her as a computer program left running was a bit of a disappointment.

And I know it just wasn't me, but good friend and fellow Doctor Who fan Dave Hicky also noticed the glaring error of the disappearing crew member. The production team may have got away with it in normal circumstances, but as he was the only black person there, it was quite noticeable how he disappeared and suddenly reappeared at the end of the episode.

And finally, do we need to have the repeat of the face of the lady with the eye patch and the Doctor not being able to tell if Amy's pregnant again? It didn't add anything to that recurring plot line at all.

So all in all I really enjoyed it, but there were far too many flaws in it for my liking. Next week a story by Neil Gaiman and it looks like there's another Timelord out there.

7 out of 10

Doctor Who S06E04 The Doctor's Wife

Well this blog is certainly popular. I get visitors every day and on Sundays after each episode I get an upsurge in readers wanting to check out my latest Whovian stylings. Shame I don't seem to be able to get it out till Monday. Don't get me wrong I'm no President Barack Obama or Noel Fielding when it comes to fans, but that doesn't stop me from being the self professed Stephen Fry of Peckham Rye. Aii!

So how have I been killing time in the world of Doctor Who till the next episode? Well I have finally started reading the novel *Human Nature* by Paul Cornell, I'm playing the free online adventure game and I'm organizing an outing with some friends to go to the *Doctor Who Experience*. Can't wait, we'll be there on 26th May 3pm with plenty of beers and a geek fest after. I've heard it's fantastic.

On Saturday I had absolutely no chance of watching Doctor Who. I had to be in the west end by 6pm and Eurovision was on. I assumed they would hold it back for a week but lo and behold if they didn't show it anyway. At the gig I got a text from the wife saying, *Doctor Poo is on tonight*. Sweet.

I didn't get to watch it on Sunday either due to going to Finchcock House to see a load of old keyboard instruments and watch an excellent impromptu concert on the old instruments. I then went straight to a friend's barbeque and got myself full of booze and full of meat, so I didn't get to watch it till Monday afternoon.

This episode was written by Neil Gaiman famous for the *Sandman* comics which had an odd habit of going from sheer brilliance to mind numbing pretentiousness from story to story. I'm one of the few people out there that read the whole lot including the *Death* miniseries, which inspired an army of saucy (and overweight) goths to emulate her on Camden High Street in the late nineties. I'm sure among the Geekdom planet there was much excitement about the great god Gaiman writing an episode of Doctor Who. All we need now is for Alan Moore to pen an episode (who did write for Doctor Who monthly).

Straight from the off the episode had a whole Gaiman feel about it, mysterious and dreamlike. As Gaiman likes to create his own worlds, it was a genius idea for him to have the TARDIS leave the universe, into a junkyard setting that explained the universe has a plug hole and things fall through. Wonderful. It was a bit like the planet of ballpoint pens in *Hitchhikers*. Uncle and Auntie were great ideas, but a little underused. The fact that Auntie had a Timelord's arm made me hope that even having bits of a Timelord would mean there would be another one out there, like the Daleks recreating themselves out of human DNA. To simply kill them off because *House* had left was a bit disappointing. But Gaiman's worlds can be harsh and many characters you warm to in the *Sandman* end with tragic pointless deaths.

The feel of the set was very Gaiman. Busy and filthy. It reminded me a bit of a Samuel Beckett play when I first saw it and thought perhaps this may have been deliberate because Idris started spouting a stream of conscious gibberish like Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*.

This episode was for the real fan boys like me out there. There were so many references to the TARDIS from previous episodes. I can't remember where I'd heard it before but I always knew it was an old TARDIS and he stole it, which gives him a special bond with this TARDIS. And when he got to talk to it, it was amazing, so much so even the doctor sheds a tear. In the past he has referred to the TARDIS to old girl and other female terms so it makes it more poignant to have the TARDIS enter a woman's body. And what a woman. Suranne Jones was amazing in this. Some of the supporting cast in the last two series have been brilliant. Toby Jones in *Amy's Choice* springs to mind.

The Doctor and Idris bickered perfectly like an old couple that really love each other, especially when he complained that she never took him where he *wanted* to go and she simply points out that she took him to where he *needed* to go. Matt Smith reacts to this perfectly as if to say he knew this all along. And we find out that she chose him, it wasn't the other way round. He thought the door was open so he'd have a joyride, but she wanted to see the universe and he was mad enough to do it. That made me feel funny inside. There was also nice nod to *Timecrash* showing that the new TARDIS consoles are more like desktops and the TARDIS always archives them without the doctor's knowing.

The ending when they discuss the new room for Amy and Rory and Rory asks if the Doctor has a room. We all know the console room is his room. This episode really brings Rory into his own. Especially when he comments that as a nurse, Idris's death got to him.

The Doctor's dance at the end and the music was sentimental and sweet, but it wasn't sickening in any way. Richard Curtis could learn a lot from watching this episode.

But I have to point out the one negative thing. Even though it was a mind trick, Rory died again. You killed Rory, you bastards.

9 out of 10

Ashley Frieze wrote

Nicely put Mr B. Totally agree. Loved the episode and thought it was pulled off with aplomb by all. I was so hoping they'd enter an 80's console room. How cool would that have been!

Brian Gallagher wrote

Based on a contribution to the Doctor Who themed podcast, The Flashing Blade (1-95, May 2011)

Neil Gaiman's episode, The Doctor's Wife has been very well received. Gaiman has clearly been inspired by The War Games – he has referred to it before. It looks like wanted to do his own version of that 1969 story, or something with similar impact. Looking back at The War Games we find out so much about the Doctor: He is a Time Lord, he stole the TARDIS, he wanted to explore the universe – and fight evil.

Gaiman wanted to match these kinds of revelations in his episode. That is what he seems to have achieved. We find out that the TARDIS is an intelligent being and that the TARDIS chose the Doctor as much as he chose her to steal.

Most importantly, we have Idris saying she took the Doctor to where needed to be rather than where he wanted to go. It is not coincidence that he ends up in dangerous situations or where he needs to fight villains. It is actually quite deliberate – the TARDIS takes him there.

This is absolutely fundamental to our understanding of the series. It is no longer the case that the Doctor's travels are random. The TARDIS takes him around the universe not so much to see it – but to fight evil monsters and so on.

This harks back to the War Games where during the trial sequence the Doctor points out that the need to fight evil. The TARDIS being the reason the Doctor has his continual battles is a change to the format of the series – one that seems almost natural. We have always not paid too much attention to the Doctor constantly getting into trouble by unlikely coincidence. Now we don't have to consider it at all.

These new ideas will have huge ramifications in the future; certainly in the way we view the series. It will be interesting to see how this fundamental point about Doctor Who plays out in the future.

If you enjoyed the Doctor's Wife, do get the DVD of The War Games. It really is a wonderful story. It is ten episodes but goes at rapid rate; watch it over a few days rather than in one go. You will clearly see where Neil Gaiman is coming from.

Brian Gallagher

Doctor Who Se06E05 The Rebel Flesh.

As usual I was at work while Doctor Who was on, but for a change I wasn't too tired to see it when I got home. The gig I did was a bit mental. They were a nice crowd, but rows 2 and 3 were really rowdy. Luckily for the rest of the audience I was on with Paul Thorne, Roger Monkhouse and Ian Cognito. No heckler got off lightly and in this gladiatorial event, the comedians won hands down. After the show Angus needed to bugger off and Manera was knackered and wanted to go home. I felt like a beer and was just about to walk to the Queen's Head or Comedy Pub when I had an idea. Why not go straight home, grab some beers on the way and watch Doctor Who. I have the mind and logic of the Timelord himself.

In Marks and Spencers the security guard watched me as I headed for the alcohol section. I scratched my nuts, grabbed a couple of beers and got home pretty sharpish, obviously drinking one of the beers on the London Bridge to Peckham Rye route. This is not just a massive two fingers up to Boris Johnston, but it's also the law where I come from.

So I bunged some food I made earlier in the microwave (stir fried veg with rice and a few sausages) and sat down to watch my beloved Doctor Who. I even got some of my jelly Daleks out that I bought in the knockdown section in Morrisons because the sell by date was almost up and discovered some saucy get had helped themselves to a few. I suspect a certain Stephanie Goldy's been snuffling my naughty cupboard. And if that don't sound filthy then nothing will.

I'd been looking forward to this since I heard that Matthew Graham *Life on Mars* writer was penning a two part episode. I liked *Fear Her*, but I really loved *Life on Mars*, I just thought it was one of the best and most inventive programs I'd seen in years and who couldn't fall in love with the Phil Glenister's portrayal of Gene Hunt? I'd have him. There's also the fact that John Simm played *The Master* in a few

episode of Doctor Who and I don't know about you, but occasionally I would feel that the Doctor was going to appear at any moment towards the end of *Life on Mars*. There's even a whole section dedicated to that subject on a fan fiction website.

From the off this episode felt very much like one of the later episodes of *Torchwood*, which is certainly a very good thing. It had a darker and a more mature feel about it right from the get go. And just for a little nod to us *Life on Mars* fans they even cast Marshall Lancaster who played Chris Skelton. Nice.

I enjoyed this episode very much so I did. It was incredibly claustrophobic and creepy and the ambiguous nature of the enemies was fab. You couldn't help but feel sorry for the gangers as they believed they were real, yet they are the very gangers they've been derisive about all along. Add this to everybody being trapped in the chapel and it feels like a sophisticated reworking of *The Thing*. And the flesh are horrifying to look at, this is real horror film stuff, the kind of thing you see squirming around on the floor of a *Hellraiser* movie.

At the start it was nice to see Pond and Rory playing darts as the Doctor busies himself with something important. It goes back to that talk Rory has with him last week about asking the Doctor if he has a room and the console room being his room. He doesn't ever seem to sleep or play. And speaking of Rory, he doesn't die in this episode but he does reference it when Jennifer says *I thought I was going to die* and Rory replies *Welcome to my world*. So is the whole is Rory died, oh no he hasn't device going to be actually integral to the story arc and we'll all get our bums smacked for being so smug? Hopefully.

I must confess I did think that there was going to be a Doctor Ganger the moment he touched the flesh and I did think, is this the Doctor that gets shot in the *Impossible Astronaut*? I hope not, that's a bit obvious isn't it, plus this could be a nice way of making us think this is the case to direct our attention from the real Doctor dying storyline.

Not much really goes on in this episode, yet it's incredibly fun to watch. The best line is *I've got to get to that cockerel before all hell breaks loose. I never thought I'd get to say that again*.

Look forward to seeing how it all pans out next week.

Oh and on a final note, coincidentally I watched Christopher and his Kind which is all about the author Christopher Isherwood, who wrote the story that would eventually be adapted to make the film *Cabaret*. Do yourself a favour and watch it but try not having someone next to you like I did saying, *this is disturbing, Doctor Who is having sex with a man* during the rude bits.

And on a final final note, Daniel Rigby won a Bafta for *Eric and Ernie* on Sunday. He was up against Matt Smith for *Doctor Who* and Benedict Cumberbatch for *Sherlock*. All three programs I love to bits and I'm sure it was a difficult decision for me to make.

Doctor Who s06e06 The Almost People

What a fun week it's been for me Doctor Who wise. I finished the New Adventure story Human Nature by Paul Cornell and enjoyed most of it. It was a little confusing in places and from what I remember when reading the first four or five New Adventures books, was they had continuity from the previous books. I don't really know much about this Bernice Summers character and know that there have been loads of books and Big Finish audio productions of her own adventures, but this was new territory for me. Don't get me wrong, it's not a bad read when you get down to the actual plot, in fact it's excellent. But the whole business with the cat being dissected and someone Bernice was in love with recently dying made me confused. Of course the only reason why I read it was because of the TV adaptation with Peter Tennant, which was amazing and for some reason I never tire of watching. The book goes into more detail and the deaths are a lot more gruesome. One of which is a teenage boy's head exploding all over his fellow classmates. Don't think that would have been considered suitable for the Saturday night family audience.

You can still download a free digital version of Human Nature in ePub, PDF and Kindle from this website

<http://www.feedbooks.com/book/2934/doctor-who-human-nature>

Check the bottom of the link and you can also get free copies of other original Doctor Who novels including *The Empire of Glass*, *The Sands of Time*, *The Scales of Injustice* and *Nightshade* (by Mark Gatiss *League of Gentlemen* fame).

The great thing about doing your internet blog on wordpress is they have a handy little thing where you can see what words people use in a search engine to find your blog. Most are fairly predictable but there was one recently that I think is worth a mention. The phrase was *dr.who-suck my dogs dick*. I assume they got here because I have a nearly complete Wesley Willis discography, of which there is a charming song called *Suck a Pitt-bull's Dick*. I had a quick check and I'm currently 12th on a list in google. Although now I've mentioned it here it'll probably be number one. Not much of an achievement, but it beats blowing strangers for change.

Now, I also performed at Tricity Vogue's excellent *Ukelele Cabaret* last week and as the theme of the night was Geekiness I decided to perform *The Doctor Who theme tune* on Ukulele and Kazoo, do an audience sing-a-long to *I Whipped Batman's Ass* by Wesley Willis and do a Uke-a-long version of *Monkeys VS Donkey* by Wild Man Fischer. Apparently the general consensus is my performances are shambolic but entertaining.

I also went to the *Doctor Who Experience* in Kensington Olympia. As a fan this is awesome fun. Admittedly it is aimed at children and families, but the security on the door didn't bat an eyelid at three paunchy middle aged unshaven men turning up either.

The actual experience itself lasts about half an hour but the gift shop and the exhibition of models and costumes will easily take up another hour of your time. The staff were really friendly too and one of them pointed out that if *The Silence* have been there since the dawn of time, then the two piece suit must be their space suits

and we've just copied them due to constantly seeing them out of the corner of our eye. He admitted they all have a lot of time on their hands so they come out with these mad theories all day. It's great to meet someone that really enjoys their job. I wonder if they have any vacancies.

After the *The Experience* my two friends Dave and Brian went to the pub and nattered about Doctor Who for a few hours. Brian told me that there was only going to be two more episodes before they took a break and continued in the autumn. I didn't know this. Bum and balls. I'll just have to make do with the new series of *Torchwood* and watching some old episodes. Speaking of which Brian pointed out that the cubes from *The Doctor's Wife* were from the Patrick Troughton episode *The War Games*, which made a massive impression on Neil Gaiman who. So I can kill some time by watching and blogging about that.

Which brings me nicely onto the recent episode *The Almost People*, the second part of *The Rebel Flesh*.

Now I was really looking forward to this episode but apart from a few bits I found it was a bit of a letdown. It started off great, as we got a montage of previous Doctor's phrase being blurted out. Not sure why the first Doctor's sentence was misquoted, but it must have been on purpose. And it was a nice twist to see that the two Doctors instantly got on well rather than became enemies, but then it isn't the first time the Doctor's worked with himself as we've seen from *The Three Doctor's*, *The Five Doctor's*, *The Two Doctor's* etc etc.

All in all this wasn't the big conclusion I was hoping for and if truth be told it was quite confusing with everyone continually running around after each other for half an hour. However the Jennifer monster at the was nice and scary, the sort of things that would have made me poo my pants when I was seven. I mean if the mummies from *The Pyramids of Mars* could induce me to lose half my body weight in excrement then children the same age now will simply disappear in a cloud of their own brown stuff. Saying that the monster was a little shoe horned in but sod it, nice big monster at the end never hurt anyone, figuratively speaking of course. And I couldn't quite workout why the Doctor had to be so mean to Pond, even if she was a ganger and needed her to believe he was a ganger. Phew, no wonder there were so many facebook status updates from confused people.

Now please tell me this. Who the hell was that guy at the end who stepped in to save the day by shutting a door? It all seemed a bit pointless as the ganger Doctor and Cleaves had to shut another door to save the day. Is this another victim of the cutting room floor? Was he more integral originally but by the time they trimmed the episode to the correct length he ended up an a TV mistake? Every now and then Doctor Who does suffer from this. The disappearing character from *The Curse of the Black Spot* recently springs to mind and I always used to wonder why Jake just kept shouting so much at Mickey when Ricky dies in *The Age of Steel*. I eventually discovered that original plot had them as gay lovers, but it had to be cut out of the final broadcast. To me the cut makes the Jake character more a bully who needs a punch in the head rather than a distraught lover. If you watch it again with that in mind it makes a lot more sense.

But what made the episode all worthwhile was the last few minutes. Not the schmaltzy bit with the ganger's kid or Cleaves and ganger "Billy no mates" goes into the press conference. No I'm talking about finding out Pond was pregnant. I did enjoy the Doctor's saying breath through the episode. It was fairly obvious eye patch woman was in Pond's real reality but to have her in control of the ganger and not being aware of it was a stroke of genius. However it did seem an unnecessarily long way to introduce the gangers for this plot device. Perhaps it needed to be two parts to let it properly sink into our psyche. I personally would have preferred to have the discovery of the ganger Pond a few more episodes down the line.

Last episode next week and then some Torchwood.

6 out of 10

Doctor Who s06e07 A Good Man Goes to War

Well this was the last episode of Doctor Who for the time being. I know it's all to do with ratings and blah de blah blah, but it's a rubbish idea to split the series into two parts. If it was 26 episodes long and they split it I'd be cool with that, in fact I'd probably prefer it as it's been such a rollercoaster I'd welcome the break. It's a measly 13 episodes and we've only just got going. Admittedly we wouldn't have had a story like A Good Man Goes to War if there was another episode next week, but we could have at least had it at the end of a season normally and waited till next year. Boo to the BBC. Just make more episodes you bastards.

I have to say that even though this was another big silly romp over populated with too many characters I bloody well loved it. Don't get me wrong it wasn't perfect, but I wasn't bored in the slightest.

So we have a base of soldiers who are religious, a little like the soldiers in Time of Angels. We're introduced to a gay couple that goes absolutely nowhere. I found the building up of these characters to simply have one killed off and the other one to not be mentioned again a waste of time. Considering some of the editing problems that have jarred previous episodes with characters turning up or disappearing, these two could have gladly ended up on the cutting room floor. The headless monks were a nice idea, but underused, perhaps they'll be back for the next part.

And who is this Lorna Bucket character? Is she important or is this just Moffat writing decent throwaway characters with a lot of depth? Or is he just laying future seeds for further episodes? Great for us "Who nuts" but it could be a massive turn off for the casual viewer. I have to admit I had to check the web to see if I missed something with these characters. I was under the impression that we'd seen them before, but it seems they were mostly well written and fully rounded just for this story.

Speaking of well rounded, I loved the opening. That was absolutely awesome. I had shivers going up my spine. How could Rory, in a Centurion costume negotiate with the Cybermen? By having the Doctor blowing the crap out of everything they own. I loved it. Truly brilliant. Although I'm not exactly sure why Rory was wearing the costume, but it did make the Cybermen look pathetic when their satellites and spaceships exploded. I did enjoy the way they were only used sparingly too. There

we were thinking it was going to be another Cybermen story but no, it's just the amuse bouche before the main banquet.

I also enjoyed the whole Madame Vestra sauciness with her lesbian relationship with her maid Jenny. It was absolutely deliciously filthy when her extremely long tongue came out suggestively. Anyone else get a semi?

Commander Strax was also another great part. When he's introduced in Battle of Zaruthstra, 4037ad, I really wanted to see more of this war that was going on. I enjoyed the way they made Strax simply a warrior with codes. If his punishment is to tend to the sick of a weaker race this is what he does and he probably does it exemplary. When his time is up, he will crush the life out of them same lives he saved in battle, but that is his code and you almost have to admire him for it. And the whole bit about being able to lactate a baby was hilarious, if a little gross.

It's another one of those episodes where not much plot actually goes on. I'm in the reasoning that by making this and the last series joined together it leaves it open for the American market who like their 20 something episodes a series. And if you take series 5 and 6 and show them together you can get away with having the odd episode that doesn't have a strong plot and only take the overall story forward a bit.

We still don't really know who eye patch woman is and why she's able to gather together such a massive army to hunt down the Doctor. I would assume her ultimate goal is to kill the Doctor so she can pave the way for Universe domination, which is impossible with the Doctor knocking around. So she's just convinced a bunch of brain dead saps that he's some sort of bad guy, because all in all they were hardly Nazis. Especially with a black guy in charge and a gay couple with one being too out of shape to be in the army.

Unlike the last Peter Tennat story Journey's End where everyone was a little underused, Moffat gave us a bunch of characters we don't know and that means that they really can be used sparingly and their personality and comments can be used to great comedic and story effect. This is evident with the return of Captain Avery to (yawn) save the day with his ineffectual son. Come on, if you want to make an entrance let's have Romana, a previous incarnation or Jenny from The Doctor's Daughter (now that's a character that needs to be brought back).

I did enjoy seeing the Doctor getting angry but it would have been better to see him put it into action and have flashes back to the Dream Lord in Amy's Choice.

It was bloody obvious but I didn't make the connection with River Song and Amy Pond. And she called the child Melody. Melody? Song? Obvious now innit. So does that mean the Doctor's done the dirty with Amy's daughter. So if River has a child and her child has a child, could that technically be Susan that travelled with the first Doctor in 1963? Could that be why he's so cagey about questions of having children? He's met them he just hasn't got around to producing them yet.

So there is a possibility that a Timelord can be created by doing the beast with two backs in a traveling TARDIS. The Doctor mentions that the exposure to the Time stream makes them Timelords but only over billions of years. So what they're saying

is they can save hell of a lot o time by bonking in the Tardis while it's in flight? Surely an intelligent race like the Timelords would have sussed that out? Surely two horny Timelord teenagers would have done it in a Time warp for the rush? Or are teenage Timelords really that boring? I'm of the opinion that there something about Amy and I don't mean Rory putting something nasty in her hair.

But could any species become a Timelord? Could a Sontaron make a Timelord? Or would the resulting Sontaran/Timelord become either be like the Master, the Doctor or would want to become part of a race similar to the Timelords have nothing to do with their war like counterparts?

And Amy's baby being a ganger. Eyepatch woman hinted at that for a while and I never got the clue.

The Doctor's cot was a nice touch and there was that little moment when the Doctor almost let slip that he'd done the nasty with Amy. But that obviously now isn't possibly because he's going to do the beast with two back with River Song. Even the snog he had with her recently would be wrong wrong wrong. Unless you live in Croydon.

The soldiers were just of the wrong side of pathetic, but then that's not a bad idea, because most actors don't make great soldiers on screen. Take the pathetic bunch in 28 Days Later. That was the point I switched off the film. This lot were laughable drama school kids.

So the baby was a weapon and she was in the space suit to kill the Doctor in The Impossible Astronaut. But then that would mean River Song kills the doctor and if they are one and the same, why didn't River Song regenerate at he end of Silence in the Library?

When Strax dies it give gravitas to what River says about the Doctor being dangerous. You make them so afraid. All these people die for a situation that the Doctor created in the first place. If he never took Amy on board the Tardis then all of those people would never have died. It has the same ramifications as Human Nature. Bucket dies purely because she wants to see the Doctor again. This is more than enough ammunition need for the eye patch woman to command a whole army against him.

However this is all pushed aside when the Doctor finally finds out who River Song really is. Isn't that bit beautiful. His little giggle is perfect and I had a funny feeling in my tummy with a combination of finally knowing who she was and a brilliant performance from both of them, although when have either of them performed below par at any point? Never I tell you, never.

And how tasty was the ending.? A skeleton hand holding a sonic screwdriver and the title of the next episode LET'S KILL HITLER. Now if there's someone the Doctor has meet and that is Hitler. Oh and possibly Jesus. And definitely Elvira Mistress of the Dark.

Doctor Who The War Games Patrick Troughton 1969

Well I've been a bit busy getting my crap together as I'm off to the Edinburgh fringe festival in just over a month, so maybe it's been a bit of a blessing to not have Doctor Who on to distract me. Funnily enough the last episode of the current series finished just in time for me to go and comper the Rhodes Rock festival in Greece and that exciting week needs a multitude of blog entries of its own.

So in the meantime, on Brian Gallagher's recommendation I got around to watching *The War Games*. I watched it many years ago on VHS and I think I borrowed it from a friend. Back then it was quite expensive to buy the video tapes of Doctor Who and this was before they started showing the episodes on UK Gold. So all my geeky Whovian friends would all make sure we didn't overlap when buying the tapes and shared the joy by lending them to each other. It was like when my friend Paul Stroud and I slowly got all The Beatles albums this way.

When I originally watched *The War Games* I was completely blown away by how brilliant it was. It was also amazing because there wasn't (and still isn't) many Patrick Troughton episodes out there, so it was amazing to have such a good story intact. If my memory serves me correct it was kept in the BFI as an example of good British television.

The greatest thing about this DVD release is the quality of the print. I and I'm sure many of us, are so used to seeing grainy copies of black and white television programs it's difficult to imagine them as being crystal clear. This is what the DVD release of *The War Games* is like and because it's from the late sixties there's a Dr Strangelove type chic about it. The wooden ray guns, the sunglasses with crosses on them, the plastic shower curtains in the middle of the room may have looked a bit cheap a decade down the line, but now it looks fabulous and quaint.

To be honest, on paper the story shouldn't have worked. It was hurriedly written by Terrence Dicks and Malcolm Hulke and the amount of times they get captured and escape beggars belief. And boy can you tell they didn't have the biggest budget in the world, but every scene is spot on. Even the so called hordes of Roman soldiers that number around 15 and the daft Mexicans that are supposed to be ruthless but are really comical add to it. All in all it's one of the best Doctor Who stories. I'd probably put it in my personal top ten.

There are some truly brilliant performances. It felt more like watching a stage play as you could regularly hear footsteps walking on wooden sets and I mean that in a good way. I never tired of General Smyth played by Noel Coleman. This was good old fashioned British acting at its best. You'd be hard pressed to find someone in a supporting role as good as this. Jane Sherwin is fabulous as Lady Jennifer Buckingham. She's terribly jolly hockey sticks all through and stiff upper lip, hoorah. The War Chief played by Edward Brayshaw is not only brilliant, but he looks fantastic too. He is incredibly stylish and you could easily get away with wearing that cool outfit at a party, in fact my friend Ricardo Lewis wouldn't have looked out of place next to him. But I would say my favourite character in the whole story is James Bree who plays the Security Chief. He spends his entire time speaking in a staccato robot like voice and is completely stiff. Again it shouldn't work, but it's an inspired performance. The bit where The War Chief and the Security Chief bicker is pure television joy. It's raw and you can tell they didn't have a chance for many retakes,

so it's not an antiseptic watch like a Michael Mann film. Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking Michael Mann, I particularly love *Heat* and *Manhunter*, it's just a world away from his very structured and thought out way of directing.

The sets in *The War Games* have gone from probably being a bit clunky and laughable to actually very cool. For example, the controls to the sophisticated futuristic technology are just shaped magnets stuck to a sheet of metal. This is supposed to be the technology of a highly advanced civilisation and all the rooms are about the size of a large lounge, but the ambition is incredible. There are so many sets and quite a few outdoor scenes that you can forgive the slightly unbelievable small size of the offices and spaceship interiors.

And there were plenty of moments that were the inspiration for *The Doctor's Wife*. Obviously there was the box that the Doctor sends to get help from the Timelords, but more tellingly are the few comments Jamie makes about the Tardis never taking the Doctor where he ever wants to go. I felt a funny warm feeling in my tummy at that moment. The whole story brought back some good memories and it was lovely to think that one of my favourite episodes of all time is still as wonderful as I remember and that there's a direct link to another wonderful episode written 42 years later.

And let's not forget that this is the second time the Doctor has encountered another Timelord (the first was the Meddling Monk in *The Time Meddler*). But this is where the Timelords are actually named for the first time. Then there is the regeneration. At the time they hadn't chosen the next Doctor so we don't get to see him transform.

This is one of the best stories ever, but possibly overlooked a little due to its incredible length. At 25 minutes an episode you're looking at over four hours of viewing. Plus there's a 3rd disc with lots of extra footage that I still need to plough through. It's certainly value for money if nothing else. And did I mention watchable? I watched the whole thing over two days. 4 episodes one day and 6 the next.

9 out of 10.

Torchwood Miracle Day 0401 The New World

So here we are. Series 4 of Torchwood. When I started watching it right from the beginning I had no idea it would have lasted this long, but thank god it went from strength to strength to strength. I made it my mission to try and watch all the previous episodes and listen to the radio shows before the new series started. But I didn't manage it. I got up to series 2, episode 8 *A Day in the Death* and then this episode arrived and I couldn't resist. I'll get around to posting my thoughts about my re-evaluation of the previous series-es, but let's kick off with the first episode of the brand spanking new shiny American version of Torchwood, *The New World*.

As with *Children of Earth*, this series will have a complete arc through the whole story and while this worked with *Children of Earth* we shall see if it can work with *Miracle Day*. *Children of Earth* worked over 5 episodes; *Miracle Day* has 10 to unwind. I'm sure there will be the odd episode that we could easily do without as you frequently had in 24.

Right from the off this is as American as Torchwood can get. The sets are bigger, the cameras glide on bigger train tracks and the actors have nice teeth. And what an opening, kiddie fiddler and murderer Oswald Danes (Bill Pullman) gets a lethal injection giving that gives him a ton of pain, but no death. The credits are also a lot slicker and subtle and make you realise that you don't need all that beating over the head flashy loud techno credits we've had previously. This is much more effective. Classier in fact.

It's certainly an ambitious show. In fact it's a little ambitious beyond its budget. Some of the CGI explosions were far from perfect and the flames coming out of the helicopter left a lot to be desired. But it was still amazing to see sexy Gwen blow up said helicopter with a bazooka. Also didn't that Welsh beach look amazing during the chase with the jeep? The last time I was on a beach in Wales it was windy and dog barked at me.

I'll be honest I had to watch it a second time because I kept getting lost in it almost being another program. I was worried that Americanising it so much would make the UK scenes and actors seem a bit naff, but it holds up really well. PC Andy (well sergeant now) and the Welsh police looked extra cool, especially as there's a bigger gang of them and not 2 or 3 because of previous budget restraints. Also was it me, or did Captain Jack sound positively British the first time he spoke, compared to the American actors?

Bill Pullman as the nonce Oswald Danes is a great (if a little pantomime) villain. But we see from the trailer that he's going to be some kind of sinful messiah, which is exactly the kind of stuff I love and why I'm still waiting for the movie version of Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Survivor*. But enough of my Waco-esque fetish, I'm just looking forward to seeing how the paedo manipulator mesmerises the gullible masses through some pseudo religion.

However the one flaw so far is CIA agent Rex Matheson (Mekhi Phifer). His guzzling of pills, sweating, out of breath grunts, hobbling around on crutches and barking his dialogue like balloons being popped were laughable to say the least. Perhaps he'll pick up as the series goes along, till then, anyone else smell bacon?

All in all it was great fun and quite silly, but I really enjoyed the story as well. In a way you could treat this as a pilot for a reboot, like the way *Star Trek TNG* was introduced. It had everything to do with the previous show, but this is a new beginning. So if you take into account it's a pilot then its bloody well executed. I'm looking forward to seeing how it all unfolds and as long as it keeps me gripped and intrigued the way it did in *Children of Earth* it can be as silly and action packed as it wants to be. Oh and top grossness marks for the suicide bomber still alive and then having Captain Jack suggest he have his head cut off. Excellent stuff.

8 out of 10

Torchwood webisode Web of Lies part 1

I've never quite got the hang of Twitter, yet I post all the time because other people seem to enjoy my mildly amusing meanderings. Only about an hour ago I finally got the benefit from it. There was a message from @elizadushku via

@Torchwood4Fans asking how we all enjoyed the webisode *Web of Lies*. I had no idea this existed so obviously I decided to give it a watch. I googled and found there was also a free iPhone app where you can watch the episodes and play some mini games all for free. Happy days.

Now, I have to admit that for a webisode that only lasts 4.47 I thought it was a bit weird for the credits to last 50 seconds. Let's hope that's not every episode. You can never expect too much with these extra's that we're given. Occasionally they work really well, like some of the *Battlestar Galactica* offerings, but I never set my hopes too high.

It's a simple story that runs parallel to *Miracle Day* and will almost definitely not be cannon. It concerns Holly (played by said twitterer Eliza Dushku) and her brother Miles, a conspiracy theorist who gets attacked for getting too close to a truth that will be slowly revealed as the series continues. It's not the best animation in the world. In fact it feels like a moving comic, which isn't a bad thing as that makes it sort of Manga style. When you download the app on the iPhone you can get to see the episode and play some simple logic games. And once you complete each section you get to see another part of the webisode (there's another 36 second section that follows) and unveil more mini games. Although I'm completely stuck on the nodes game because I don't actually understand what I'm supposed to do. Does that make me thick? If you are as thick as me you can watch the episodes on YouTube, but if you have half a brain I'm sure it's more fun to do it via the games.

Torchwood Revisited part 1

While the fourth series of Torchwood was about to start I decided to go back and re watch every episode right from its entirety and re evaluate it. Originally I couldn't get on with the first series but I still sat through every episode religiously because I knew there would be a reference to some episode of *Doctor Who* or other. I also prayed that it would improve and not go the way of *K9 and Company*, because there was something nice in knowing there's a little more of the *Who* universe continuing while the beeb made the next series of *Doctor Who*. I still haven't got around to watching the Australian *K9*, but give me time. I originally found the so called adult content was quite frankly a little childish. And apart from Captain Jack and the drop dead sexy Gwen, I thought the rest of the cast were a little 2 dimensional, which is a shame as I have seen some of them in other programs and they're perfectly fine actors. Either they were badly cast or the characters were simply misused. The most laughable episode was the Cyber Woman debacle. Bad acting, bad dialogue and some dodgy running around a table Keystone cops style.

The second series certainly picked up and about two thirds were really excellent stories. The adult themes became less about swearing and sex and more about really good intelligent plots. One of the most amazing episodes was the one with the missing persons. The scene where the woman meets her child as an adult and he screams is heartbreaking. Also the episodes concerning Tosh were a highlight.

The only thing I remember spoiling series two is the relationship between Captain Jack and Yentob. For me it did nothing to the plot and I wasn't vaguely bothered when he died in series three. I know hardcore fans were up in arms about it, but I just knew we could dispense with that nonsense and get on with the stories. And

having Owen become the living dead felt a little too close to Captain Jack being immortal.

However the third series *Children of Earth* was so good it was better than the recent Doctor Who specials which were considerably lukewarm. Torchwood was a more than welcome return. And I was also pleased that PC Andy got more a meaty role as I know Tom Price from way back and really like his character. I saw Tom many years ago in an excellent play about Graham Chapman called *A Very Naughty Boy* that was written by the very talented Adrian Poynton who wrote the TV series *White Van Man*.

Out of interest I asked some of my friends on facebook what they thought of Torchwood and the general replies were

What's Torchwood?

I've never read it, is it any good?

The room was full of milkman some of which have been there a long time.

My mum went to see John Barrymore sing and it was full of drooling middle ages women.

So imagine my shock when Brian Gallagher, who contributes to the Doctor Who podcast [The Flashing Blade](#) actually sent me something sensible which I shall I shall reproduce here.

Torchwood originally intended to be 'edgy', 'adult' and so on – but came across as being a bit seedy. Some episodes were a bit dull too.

Those two series were successful for BBC 3, then BBC 2. However, one suspects that the BBC wanted something with much broader appeal for the outlay they must have spent on it. It may have been cheaper than Doctor Who, but each series consisted of 13 episodes. As a science-fiction series it could not have been that cheap.

A clue came with the second series. A 'pre-watershed' version – with the 'adult' scenes toned down or excised – was also screened for younger viewers. The BBC wanted the audience extended.

After the second series, the series came back the following year but for only five episodes – Children of the Earth. One suspects that someone at the BBC felt it had run its course by the end of series two. Although the third series was screened on BBC One, it was screened during the summer – not traditionally the best time for new series to be screened. Both Russell T. Davies and John Barrowman made some criticism over all this.

In a few years time we will no doubt get the full story, in Doctor Who reference books and so on when people are more likely be frank.

Children of the Earth was very likely some kind of make or break for Torchwood. The whole thing was revamped. Less seediness and it was genuinely 'adult' and 'edgy'. And a great success it was too. Had the five episodes been in series one or two style, it would very likely have flopped. It is unfortunate indeed that the series was not produced in this manner in the first place.

And now we have a fourth series – this time increased to ten episodes. Very geared to a post 9/11 sensibility, it has started off well - with series one and two stylistically effectively forgotten.

That pretty summed up what I thought of it, just less eloquently.

I've only ever watched each episode once and in hindsight a programme is better when you re evaluate it. Yes, this is incredibly geeky of me and I know I should be spending more time writing material for my Edinburgh show and my millions of other projects like making a website for one of the newly extended family and booking gigs and getting ready for my masters degree and doing Lego animation etc etc rrrrr!

But fuck it, here goes.

Torchwood 0101 Everything Changes

Now I seem to remember not enjoying this episode too much. It all appeared a bit predictable the first time round and some of the swearing was a bit childish and crow barred in, but in hindsight I really enjoyed it. I think the rest of the cast were a lot more believable because they weren't in it much, but I wasn't too keen on Suzie Costello as a character. Especially at the end. Her heartfelt speech was pretty cringe worthy and over the top. However I don't want to be too harsh on the first episode, because they obviously still hadn't found their feet. I was also a little miffed at the time, as to me this was just a modernised UNIT in the 21st century, but as the series progressed it was obvious that this was anything but UNIT and it would be unlikely that UNIT would downsize from an army that likes to blow up anything they don't understand to a team of 5 that have minimal military training. There were talks of a UNIT series but the problem was they would be likely to just blow everything up at the end of each episode. What's so wrong with that? Anyone who watched the thermite experiments on *Braniacs* will attest to the power of repeatedly watching things being destroyed in the name of mind numbing entertainment.

I enjoyed the way they didn't try and go for a big monster or an elaborate plot to hook us in. It was more subtle than that and it had a bleak feel to it. To know that the Torchwood team were only going to the murder scenes simply to try out the glove is dark stuff. Then to find out Suzie was doing the murders was totally unexpected. The scene where Owen Harper goes to the bar to pick up the woman is totally redundant and I never really believed in his character till he does interesting things like pretends to be a seafood importer to gain entry to the Alien Fight Club. This where he comes into his own or maybe I'm just jealous because he gets it on with Gwen in later episodes. Speaking of which, the best moment is Gwen sitting at the dressing table in her nightie. So for being the pilot episode and the nightie I give this episode

7 out of 10

Torchwood 0102 Day One

Ah. I remember rolling my eyes a lot through this episode. This is the one with the sex alien. So to be a more adult version of Doctor Who we have to have a monster that shags in the toilets. Who's the back up? A Dalek with a plunger to unblock the u-bend? Also the bouncer wanking in the office was a mildly amusing joke, but by that time I felt that I'd been beaten round the head with the big black cock of smut a little too much for a sci-fi show. No wonder they called it Torch "wood". But as I'm slowly finding, there's some nice subtle bits to the show. Owen being sexist towards Gwen is just a bit of flirting that will come to fruition later in the series. The seeds were being sewn if you pardon the expression.

Now I've often complained about Russell T Davis jarring plotlines by gratuitously throwing in gay references, but on an artistic level it was a stroke of creative genius and one of the most excellent plot devices since *Citizen Kane* and *The Seventh Seal* to have Gwen in a lesbian grapple with a teenage girl possessed by nymphomaniac alien made of gas in a dingy cell. Oh yes.

The whole Jack Harkness/severed hand in the jar was confusing at first but now it's obvious. I wasn't expecting the show to have such a connection with Doctor Who right from the start, so that threw me. Because as you know this is the Doctor's severed hand from *The Christmas Invasion*.

However I was a little disappointed with the ending. Just to have the alien escape, run around for a bit and then get caught with the portable prison was a little drab and predictable in an episode that showed a lot of promise. But it does have some great moments. I really liked the way Gwen just couldn't listen to Rhys. It echoes what Suzie said at the end of the last episode about how the job eats you up and how difficult it is to go back to normal life. Not an amazing story, but I'm more impressed the second time around.

6 out of 10

Torchwood Revisited part 2

Torchwood 0103 Ghost Machine

So far this is the best episode. OK, I know it's only the third one, but this is right up my street. More like an episode of *Cracker* than a sci-fi program. I don't remember liking Owen by this point originally, but here he's good. When he saw the start of the rape and murder of Lizzie this was where the character started to shine. Perhaps the bullshit laddishness juxtaposed with the genuinely frightened and powerless person we see has more impact and not only was this was top notch tense stuff I enjoyed it more on a second viewing.

There was also a nice bit of sexual tension between Captain Jack and Gwen in the firing range and a nice moment of Gwen with two guns. Is there nothing she can't do sexy? I bet she could give you semi cleaning the toilet. I thought it was a nice touch when Gwen asks Jack where he sleeps and it's obvious he lives in the Torchwood facilities and probably never sleeps. Or at least it's insinuated. The Doctor Who

episode *The Doctor's Wife* hints that the Doctor lives in the control room and never sleeps.

There was just one decent scene after another and I particularly enjoyed it when Owen confronts Lizzie's murderer and the fact that he was able to describe the scene in such detail was gripping.

This was much more in line with the idea that Torchwood was to be the adult Doctor Who because the themes are adult rather than having a bunch of bodily functions of display to push the program past the watershed. Although it was slightly spoiled by having the murdering rapist kill himself by landing on the knife Gwen's holding. Mainly because the knife didn't look sharp enough to cut through a fart. At least we didn't end with the cliché of Owen running Bernie over with the Torchwood car. Now that would have been pathetic.

The next one's the Cyberwoman episode. Let's see if it's as bad as I remembered.

7 out of 10

Torchwood 0104 Ciderwoman

This is actually worse than I remember it. Right from the off this is rubbish. Let's get this right, Yento who is basically the tea boy is able to shift tons of hi tech equipment and his half cyber woman girlfriend in a top security building without anyone noticing? Bollocks.

And Yento couldn't have been that into his girlfriend because a year later he's battling for the other team with Captain Jack. And I can't blame him. There is a complete and utter lack of chemistry between him and his Cyber girlfriend. By the way, judging by her acting the suit should have been made out of wood. And did anyone else notice the cyber high heels and cyber bra? I'm sure they weren't issue during Tom Baker's day.

Now tell me if this is a bad plot device. When the Japanese guy gets killed, Yento feels the need to drag the body halfway through the Torchwood basement to hide it. Surely leaving it where the Cyberwoman is would be more than fine? If they haven't stumbled across her by now, they're hardly going to trip over a dead body in the same place. Also after the stunning performance from Owen last week, he lets himself down by going all gravelly like Jack Bower when he first sees the conversion unit.

Alright, I know I'm giving it a pasting, so let's look at what was positive about it. Erm, Gwen strapped down in the cyber conversion unit. Phoar. Now back to the pasting.

Yento's blubbering and whining was seriously irritating. I would have thrown him in a cell for getting everyone into that mess but mainly to make shut him up the dribbling fool.

More daft plot devices. The Cyberwoman is about to go for Gwen, but Owen stops her by saying, "What you waitin' for?" and then she simply follows? Then Jack Harkness says, "This is a fight to the death." No it's not. All they'd have to do it

shout, "Oi over here" from different directions enough time to have her standing at the bottom of a cliff and then simply drop an anvil on her head. It works in the Road Runner cartoons and those are a hell of a lot more sensibly written than this pile of crap.

Although it's still not as bad as the abomination that is Richard Curtis' Blind Chicken episode of Doctor Who.

And what a stupid ending. Covering her in with barbecue sauce and letting the Pterodactyl eat her beggars belief. Yanto needs a seriously good punch in the mouth throughout this episode. I'm surprised they didn't just give him a massive dose of amnesia pills and dumped him in the nearest midnight KFC.

And just when you relax and say thank god that's over, she comes back with her brain transplanted in the delivery girl's head, which she managed to do in about 4 minutes.

And who thought the final scene with the romantic music playing while Yanto has a big snot trail coming out of his nose was good idea?

Awful. This wasn't so funny it was bad and Yentob, get a tissue man.

1 out of 10

Doctor Who Autumn 2011 trailer

God I'm sad. When I heard this was out via @michaellegge on Twitter I got so excited just to watch the 1.07 clip. Oh god it's great. The monsters look fab, Matt Smith is cheeky as ever. River Song has an eyepatch????????? What the bloody hell could that mean? There's Cybermen, Weeping Angels, The Silence and no Daleks thanks god. Not sure if you're like me and found the last few Dalek stories lame to say the least. And I've got high hopes for *Let's Kill Hitler*. Let's hope it doesn't end up like *Victory of the Daleks*. Nice idea, but a bit as I said, bit lame.

However it looks like we have the return of Winston Churchill and from what we know the 5th and 6th series are connected, so maybe *Victory of Daleks* and *Let's Kill Hitler* connect. Oh and Rory gets to punch Hitler.

Can't wait.

Torchwood web of lies part 2

Technology . Crap innit. First of I looked forward to seeing the 2nd episode of Web of Lies and found out I had to pay for it. I mean it's fun, but certainly not worth paying for. I get to read the main bits of the Guardian for a year for £3.99. Now that I don't mind paying for. Although I'm completely pissed off with paying £3.49 for a guide of Rhodes and finding the free map of Lindos better value for money. Angry Birds is cool, well worth 59p. But I aint paying for this. It's not even the whole lot. You have to pay for individual lessons and it doesn't even say how much they cost. Anyhow, I can't watch it right now, my bloody iPhone has gone up shit creek again. The one I bought second hand after my last one went belly under was jailbroken. I didn't know this, but this means if you try to upgrade to the new operating software

Apple deliberately set it up so it fucks up your phone. I had to take it to the repair shop and let them do it. I tried to look at the tutorials and websites that say they can help you out, but not one of them worked. And the people that put the tutorials on YouTube? Guys, learn to speak clearly and in plain English and not Techno-Klingon. I lost most of you half way.

So I shall not be paying for any episodes of Web of Lies, because I'm more than patient to be able to wait to see them when they're issued on the DVD extras for series 4. And if they're not on there I can live without them.

0 out of 10

Torchwood Web of lies for the foreseeable future

I think in life you get what you deserve. After my iPhone bugging up, the only way to get it working again was to take it to one of the many many many phone repair shops in Peckham and get it reset. However it's now stuck on firmware 4.1 and the Torchwood app in 4.2. So I cannae download it.

Oh well, off to the Edinburgh festival.