



## DESTINATION TIME TRAVEL: PLAYING WITH TIME IN FILM AND TV

### The Time Machine

Mon 16 Oct 20:40; Sat 28 Oct 15:10;  
Mon 20 Nov 18:15

### Time after Time

Sun 22 Oct 18:20; Mon 13 Nov 20:40

### Time Bandits

Wed 25 Oct 20:45; Thus 26 Oct 14:40;  
Sun 5 Nov 11:30

### Je t'aime je t'aime

Thu 26 Oct 20:40; Sat 18 Nov 18:30

### Telling the Tales of Time + Q&A with

#### Steve Nallon

Fri 27 Oct 18:15

### Run Lola Run Lola rennt

Fri 27 Oct 20:45

### Donnie Darko

Sat 28 Oct 18:00; Sat 11 Nov 20:20;  
Fri 17 Nov 20:45

### Somewhere in Time

Thu 2 Nov 20:30; Sat 18 Nov 14:20

### The TARDIS: The Most Famous Time Machine in the Universe

Sat 4 Nov 12:00

### Comedy Time-Travel Special with writer Rob

Grant, actor Robert Llewellyn, exec producer

Paul Jackson and director Ed Bye – Red Dwarf:

#### Backwards + Timewasters

Sun 5 Nov 14:15

### Planet of the Apes

Thu 9 Nov 20:45

### Tomorrow I'll Wake Up and Scald Myself with

Tea Zítva vstanu a oparím se cajem + La Jetée

Fri 10 Nov 20:40; Sat 25 Nov 15:00

### The Tomorrow People: A Rift in Time + Q&A

Sat 11 Nov 12:00

### Predestination

Sat 18 Nov 20:45; Tue 28 Nov 18:20

### Lazarus Table Reading

Sun 19 Nov 15:15

### Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes Dorosute no

hate de bokura + Felix the Cat Trifles with Time

Tue 21 Nov 18:30; Thu 23 Nov 21:00

## DESTINATION: TIME TRAVEL AT BFI IMAX

### 12 Monkeys + La Jetée

Sun 22 Oct 11:30

### The Terminator + Terminator 2: Judgment Day

Mon 30 Oct 18:30

### Back to the Future Trilogy

Sun 19 Nov 11:30

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## DESTINATION TIME TRAVEL: PLAYING WITH TIME IN FILM AND TV

# The TARDIS: The Most Famous Time Machine in the Universe

In a case of fiction eclipsing reality, the TARDIS displaces more cultural water than any genuine police box glimpsed in archive footage or a film like *The Blue Lamp* (1950), as if C. S. Lewis were so widely read that *all* wardrobes were seen primarily as portals to Narnia. On screen before the Doctor, his companions, the Daleks, the sonic screwdriver or even the title of the first episode, the TARDIS is the *only* constant in the show – which is ironic in that the machine is supposed to change shape to match wherever it happens to materialise but gets stuck as a police box when the ‘camouflage unit’ fails early in ‘The Cave of Skulls’. Boiled down to its simplest format, *Doctor Who* is a character actor and a police box. On its first appearance, the TARDIS gives off an electrical sound and ‘feels alive’ to the touch; though the interior would continue to thrum, these external signifiers of alienness would be phased out, until the TV movie and revival series decided that the time machine was practically a living thing.

Our way into the box, a doorway to the infinite, is through Barbara Wright and Ian Chesterton, teachers at Coal Hill School. Hearing Susan’s voice inside the police box, Ian and Barbara brush aside the Doctor’s objections and stumble in to find that (like the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) the TARDIS is bigger inside than it is outside. The teachers are astonished. This moment will be repeated over and over, almost as a rite of passage for every regular on the show. It’s such a mind-stretching concept that it has to be hashed over several times in clunky dialogue: ‘You’ve discovered television, haven’t you?’ snips the Doctor, unhelpfully – reasoning that there is an equivalence between showing an enormous building on a small screen and the inside-out dimensions of his time-space machine. There are solid production reasons for the TARDIS’s nature: the control room is a spacious, standing set (blinding white walls with signature roundels and the hexagonal central control console) while the police box is a moveable prop. At first, the interior seems to consist of this one room and the exterior might be an illusion: the doors open directly to the outside world and, seen from within the TARDIS, match the design of the control room, only taking the form of police box doors when looked at from the outside.

Later, a few other areas would be seen including back-up control rooms, like the wood-panelled version introduced in ‘The Masque of Mandragora’ (1976) when the production team got fed up with a hold-over set that had remained essentially a black-and-white design even after the show began to be made in colour. The possibility that the TARDIS’s interior wasn’t just bigger than the outside but *infinite* would be touched on from time to time but never quite take hold. The 1996 and 2005 revivals make the time machine a living, perhaps sentient thing with a habit of swallowing evil people whole and an energy source that might threaten any world the ship had stopped off on (invariably Earth) if mishandled (of course, this repetition could be down to Russell T. Davies cribbing the finale of ‘Boom Town’ from the last act of Matthew Jacobs’ TV movie script).

At once a home and a ship, the TARDIS soon became cosy – though it breaks down often to suit the plot and prevent the Doctor from becoming too omnipotent a figure to be embroiled in various adventures. Originally, Susan

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states she invented the name, an acronym for 'Time and Relative Dimension in Space' (sometimes 'Dimensions'). The TARDIS is a utopian playroom, as opposed to the dystopian playroom that would show up in 'The Celestial Toymaker'. It is as safe as being snug under the bedcovers, and similarly offers transport to dreams and nightmares. Occasionally, to demonstrate its essentially magical nature, the TARDIS would take the Doctor and companions not to another time or planet but to a limbo, dreamworld or alternative dimension, most successfully the 'Land of Fiction' in 'The Mind Robber' (1968). It is at once home base and vehicle, combining the functions of Marineville and Stingray or Tracy Island and the Thunderbirds; but, in contrast to the technophile kindergarten of Gerry Anderson's shows, there would be no schematics for the TARDIS, no blueprints to limit its dimensions. As a home, it isn't that practical – the control room has surprisingly few *chairs*, hence a great deal of standing around or falling about.

The TARDIS has that near-inviolability common to 221B or the Batcave: for a while, it seems the time machine only admits friendly folk, offering safe haven from any Daleks or cavemen who might be ranting and fuming outside its indestructible, impregnable shell. Even early on, the show is finding ways of using this sense of a reassuring home base to tighten the screws. At the end of 'The Survivors', Episode Two of 'The Daleks', Susan alone returns to the comfort of the TARDIS after a journey through the radioactive jungles of Skaro. She takes a moment to overcome her inclination to stay in this secure environment before forcing herself into the threatening world outside to save her companions. Most cliffhangers depend on climaxes of danger or revelation, but this is a rare instance of heroism as slingshot into next week's action. Frequently malfunctioning, a randomising element that serves to generate entire plots or more often to prevent too-easy escape from a story in progress, the TARDIS is nevertheless the show's safe house. Just as Dr Grimesby Roylott would explode into Holmes' rooms for shock effect in 'The Speckled Band', *Doctor Who* would eventually, if sparingly, have the TARDIS invaded by Cybermen or Sontarans to indicate more than ordinary peril. Originally, writers were cautioned against using the TARDIS too much as a plot device – it got the heroes to and from places, but did not solve their problems; Russell T. Davies would ignore this in 'The Parting of the Ways' (2005), in which the 'telepathic' vessel's conduit to the awesome forces of time and space is used to save the day, though at the cost of a lead actor.

Kim Newman, *BFI TV Classics: Doctor Who* (BFI Publishing, 2005)

With special thanks to the BBC, Simon Gurrer, Mike Tucker, Mark Ayers, Malcolm Thornton, *Doctor Who Magazine* and Ed Stradling.

## Panel

**Steve Nallon** is a writer, voice artist and actor. Steve's acting and voice artist work ranges from theatre, film and television, to video games, puppetry and audio books. As a playwright and comedy writer, Steve has a considerable body of credits to his name, including plays and series for BBC radio, three one-man theatre shows, plus the satirical book *I, Margaret*, which he co-wrote with the novelist Tom Holt. *The Time that Never Was*, the first in Steve's Time Adventure book series *The Swiggers*, was published by Luath Press in 2022. Over the years, Steve has contributed to numerous periodicals such as *The New Statesman* and *Musical Stages*, and is a much sort after speaker on the lecture circuit for his insightful and amusing talks. He is the co-author of *Destination Time Travel*, a guide to time-travel in film, books and TV.

## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

**23 Seconds to Eternity + BFI DVD & Blu-ray launch + Q&A with director Bill Butt**

Mon 6 Nov 18:10

**Preview: The Eternal Daughter** + Q&A with writer-director Joanna Hogg and actor Tilda Swinton  
Fri 10 Nov 19:00

**Exhibition: The Red Shoes: Beyond the Mirror**

From Fri 10 Nov to Sun 7 Jan

**Matthew Bourne's production of The Red Shoes**  
+ Q&A with Matthew Bourne and Ashley Shaw  
Sat 11 Nov 15:00

**Preview: Is There Anybody Out There?** + Q&A  
with director Ella Glendining, hosted by Jack Thorne

Sat 11 Nov 17:45

**Preview: The Red Shoes**

Sun 12 Nov 15:30

**Preview: Typist Artist Pirate King + Q&A with director Carol Morley, cast Monica Dolan, Gina McKee and Kieran Bew, producer Cairo Cannon, composer Carly Paradis and editor Alex Mackie**

Mon 13 Nov 17:55

**Journey to Italy** Viaggio in Italia + extended introduction by Jeremy Cooper and Ben Rivers

Mon 13 Nov 20:40

**Joanna Hogg in Conversation**

Wed 15 Nov 18:30

**Preview: Rustin + Q&A with director George C. Wolfe. Hosted by David Olusoga**

Tue 21 Nov 18:15

**Talk: The Creative Worlds of Powell + Pressburger**

Sat 25 Nov 12:00-17:00

**TV Preview: Vigil + Q&A with cast Suranne Jones, Romola Garai, Dougray Scott and writer Tom Edge**

Mon 27 Nov 18:15

**Mark Ayres** is a composer, arranger, sound designer, mixer and mastering engineer.

With a lifelong interest in film, music, and electronics, Mark took an eccentric joint degree and therefore holds a BSc (Hons) in Electronics and Music. He started his professional life as a sound engineer at UK breakfast television station TVam before turning freelance five years later. He wrote incidental music for *Doctor Who* in the 1980s during Sylvester McCoy's tenure, for stories 'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy', 'Ghost Light' and 'The Curse of Fenric'. More recently he wrote the music for, sound-designed and mixed the reconstructed 'lost' Tom Baker adventure, 'Shada', and is currently completing work on a celebratory feature length version of the original 1963 'Daleks' serial to be transmitted on BBC4 on 23 November, *Doctor Who's* 60th birthday. He has composed for television and film including scores for 1996 feature *The Innocent Sleep* (a mafia thriller starring Rupert Graves, Annabella Sciorra and Michael Gambon, with soprano Lesley Garrett on the soundtrack) and the more recent *Scar Tissue*.

Mark was involved in the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's final days and went on to become their archivist. A personal friend of Delia Derbyshire, he was entrusted with her personal archive after her death in 2001, which is now on permanent loan to the University of Manchester John Rylands Library and accessible for study. His devotion to the Workshop after *Doctor Who* ceased broadcasting in 1989 proved vital in regenerating interest in their work, and he is now the driving force behind their live revival on the festival circuit and in the creation of new works including the score for Matthew Holness' disturbing psychological horror film, *Possum*. He has produced and mastered many recordings for Silva Screen Records and others, and his work remastering classic television programmes including *Doctor Who*, *Quatermass*, and the films of Ken Russell and Alan Clarke for broadcast, DVD and Blu-ray, including 5.1 remixes of many titles, has been highly acclaimed.

Until recently Mark was a director of the Ivors Academy of Music Creators, and chaired their Media Music Committee.

**Malcolm Thornton:** I joined the BBC Art Department as an Assistant Art Director in June 1973 after studying Interior and Exhibition Design at Hornsey Art College.

I was 'trained on the job' in Designing for TV and Film and became a staff designer in about 1976.

The first *Doctor Who* story I designed was 'Logopolis' followed by 'Kinda', 'The Five Doctors' and 'The Planet of Fire'.

I designed many other productions for the BBC before I left to go freelance. I continued working in the film and television industry until I retired in 2018. The last production that I worked on was *Lucky Man* for SKY 1 which was a Stan Lee inspired, super hero Cop drama series.

I taught at Kingston University and Wimbledon College of Art until the Covid pandemic struck, after which I finally put down my pencil.'