



EVENTS

Doctor Who: The Sea Devils

+ Q&A with Katy Manning

Making 'The Sea Devils'

The popularity of the eponymous subterranean menaces from series seven's *Doctor Who and the Silurians* hadn't gone unnoticed by producer Barry Letts and script editor Terrance Dicks who were keen to bring them back, but also to have an adventure for the Doctor, Jo Grant and UNIT set near the sea. Writer Malcolm Hulke, who had created the Silurians, had served in the Royal Navy during World War Two so seemed the obvious choice to combine these two threads. On being commissioned to tackle the serial in March 1971, his solution was to create a sibling race, an aquatic offshoot of the Silurians for a draft titled *The Sea Silurians*. Letts and Dicks were also keen to see The Master back in action. They'd been concerned that he was in danger of becoming overused after he'd appeared, played by Roger Delgado, in all five of series seven's stories and had decided that he should be used sparingly thereafter. *The Sea Silurians* was scheduled to be the third story of series nine (though it was recorded before the story that would precede it, *The Curse of Peladon*), The Master being absent from the first two, *Day of the Daleks* and *The Curse of Peladon*.

Having worked with the British Army on *The Invasion* in 1968 and the RAF on *The Mind of Evil* (1971), it was now the Royal Navy's turn, and the Ministry of Defence was all too pleased to allow their forces to take part, but only so long as the programme cast the service in a favourable light. This would give the production invaluable access to Ministry of Defence facilities like the Fraser Gunnery Range at the shore establishment HMS St George in Portsmouth and the training vessel HMS Reclaim as well as military personnel who treated filming as a training exercise.

Filming would begin at HMS St George on 21 October under the direction of Michael Briant, previously the director of *Colony in Space*. By this time, Hulke's scripts had been retitled *The Sea Devils* and, as written, they presented Briant with a challenge – originally, the first two episodes had largely seen set aboard an oil rig and it proved impossible to find one for location work. Some hasty last-minute rewrites moved the action to a sea fort and Briant and his team were able to use No Man's Land Fort, one of the Palmerston Forts built between 1867 and 1880 in the Solent just off the Isle of Wight. Other locations were found on the Isle of Wight itself, including Norris Castle in East Cowes, standing in for the prison holding The Master, the beach at Whitecliff Bay, Red Cliff at Sandown and the quay at Bembridge Sailing Club.

Other challenges that Briant had to contend with were Delgado's fear of water (a particular problem given that they were on an island and much of the action would take place in or very near the sea), fog ruining a day's shooting, Katy Manning injuring her hands during an abseiling sequence and Pertwee bruising his ribs after falling on the sonic screwdriver prop. So it was probably

with some relief when, in the first week of November, production settled into the more easily controlled confines of TC8, one of the studios at the BBC's Television Centre in Wood Lane, London. Over the course of three two-day recording sessions, Briant completed the story with no further complications – he'd end up providing the voice of a radio DJ heard in episode two.

Hulke had taken the opportunity with *The Sea Devils* to try to rectify an error he'd made in *Doctor Who and the Silurians* (land animals of the Silurian era were tiny and unsophisticated, not like the reptilian creatures that took their name from it). Here, The Doctor refers to the Sea Devils as Eocenes, which was better though still no more accurate – Sea Devils would have been as unlikely to have evolved during the Eocene era than they would have done in the Silurian age. Hulke also introduced the immortal phrase 'I've reversed the polarity of the neutron flow' which rapidly became something of a catchphrase for the Third Doctor.

The Sea Devils was first broadcast on BBC One between 26 February 1972 and 1 April 1972, though viewing figures for episode one were down on the rest of the serial due to power cuts caused by industrial action. To bring viewers up to speed, the BBC presented a lengthy recap of episode one before the second part was shown. The broadcast brought a pair of unusual visitors to Briant's doorstep – the serial had used a model of a submarine purchased from Woolworths and the effects team modified the propeller, making it look strangely like the real prototype of the Polaris submarine being developed by the Ministry of Defence, and two Naval intelligence officers turned up demanding to know where the production team got their plans from...

The serial scored well with the public and a condensed omnibus edition was broadcast on the afternoon of 27 December 1975 and again, unscheduled, on 27 May 1974 when the Roses cricket match between Yorkshire and Lancashire, due to be televised on BBC One, was called off due to rain. The entire serial was repeated between 6 March and 10 April 1992, this broadcast taken from copies recovered from Canada in the early 1980s after it was discovered that the first three episodes only existed in the BBC archives as black and white copies.

Although the Sea Devils have been popular with fans and the public alike, they have thus far only re-appeared twice, the first time in the much derided Fifth Doctor story *Warriors of the Deep* (1984) and then again in the Thirteenth Doctor's *Legend of the Sea Devils* (2022).

Kevin Lyons, eofftv.com

DOCTOR WHO: THE SEA DEVILS

Directed by: Michael Briant
©: BBC
Producer: Barry Letts
[Written] By: Malcolm Hulke
Script Editor: Terrance Dicks
Studio Lighting: Mike Jefferies
Film Cameraman: Peter Sargent
Film Editor: Martyn Day
Title Music by: Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop
Title Music Arranged and recorded by: Delia Derbyshire *
Incidental Music by: Malcolm Clarke, BBC Radiophonic Worskhop
Sound: Tony Millier, Colin Dixon
Special Sounds by: Brian Hodgson
Costumes: Maggie Fletcher
Make-up: Sylvia James
Visual Effects: Peter Day
Designer: Tony Snoaden
Production Assistant: Colin Dudley *
Assistant Floor Manager: John Bradburn *
The BBC wish to acknowledge the help given to them by the Royal Navy in the making of this programme
Action: Havoc
Fight Arranger: Derek Ware *
Stunts: Marc Boyle *, Peter Brace *, Alan Chuntz *, Jack Cooper *, Stuart Fell *, Billy Horrigan *, Mike Horsborough *, Mike Stephens *, Terry Walsh *, Derek Ware *

Cast

Jon Pertwee (*Doctor Who*)
Roger Delgado (*The Master*)
Katy Manning (*Jo Grant*)
Edwin Richfield (*Captain Hart*)
Clive Morton (*Trenchard*)
Royston Tickner (*Robbins*)
Neil Siler (*radio operator*)
Declan Mulholland (*Clark*)
Hugh Fatcher (*Edwin Hickman*)
June Murphy (*3rd Officer Jane Blythe*)
Alec Wallis (*Ldg. Telegraphist Bowman*)
Brian Justice (*Castle Guard Wilson*)
Terry Walsh (*Castle Guard Barclay*)
Pat Gorman (*Sea Devil*)
June Murphy (*3rd Officer Jane Blythe*)
Eric Mason (*C.P.O. Smedley*)
Donald Sumpter (*Commander Ridgeway*)
David Griffin (*Lt. Commander Mitchell*)
Christopher Wray (*Ldg. Seaman Lovell*)
Stanley McGeagh (*Castle Guard Drew*)
Colin Bell (*C.P.O. Summers*)
Brian Vaughn (*Lt Commander Watts*)
Rex Rowland (*A/B Girton*)
Martin Boddey (*Walker*)
Norman Atkyns (*Rear Admiral*)
Peter Forbes-Robertson (*chief Sea Devil*)
John Caesar (*C.P.O. Myers*)
Michael Briant (*voice of DJ*) *
Steven Ismay, Brian Nolan, Frank Seton, Jeff Witherick (*Sea Devils*) *
Stewart Barry, Bob Blaine, Les Clark, Jim Dowdall,
Brian Gilmar, Phillip Weston (*chateau guards*) *
Jim Dowdall, Nick Llewellyn, Roy Pearce,
Dennis Plenty, Ron Tingley (*ratings*) *
Jim Dowdall, Brian Gilmar, Nick Llewellyn, Roy Pearce, Dennis Plenty,
Ron Tingley, Phillip Weston (*naval base sailors*) *

BBC1 tx 26.2 – 1.4.1972
6 x 25 mins

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Vivian Stanshall biographer
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BFI Archive Curator
Thu 9 Mar 20:45
Margaret Rutherford and Friends + intro by Claire Mortimer,
author of *Spinsters, Widows and Chars*
Wed 15 Mar 18:15

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Monday 13 March 20:45

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