



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; Thu 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 Zítřka 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)

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