

= Dinosaurs on a Spaceship =

" Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " is the second episode of the seventh series of the British science fiction television programme Doctor Who . It first aired on BBC One in the UK on 8 September 2012 and on BBC America on the same date in the United States . It was written by Chris Chibnall and directed by Saul Metzstein .

The episode features alien time traveller the Doctor ( Matt Smith ) and his companions Amy Pond ( Karen Gillan ) and Rory Williams ( Arthur Darvill ) accompanied by Rory 's father Brian ( Mark Williams ) , Queen Nefertiti ( Riann Steele ) , and John Riddell , a British big @-@ game hunter ( Rupert Graves ) . The group lands on a large spaceship that contains dinosaurs and discover that it is a Silurian ark , though the Silurians have been murdered by Solomon ( David Bradley ) , a black market trader who is intent on finding something of value .

" Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " was conceived to be a fun episode , based on a suggestion from the special effects teams about incorporating dinosaurs into Doctor Who . The storyline and characters were developed between Chibnall and head writer and executive producer Steven Moffat . Due to budget limitations , a wider plot had to be developed because the dinosaurs could not be the centerpiece . The dinosaurs were a mix of props and computer @-@ generated imagery . Along with the third episode , " A Town Called Mercy " , " Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " was in the first production block of the seventh series , with production commencing in early 2012 on large sets and Southerndown beach , Vale of Glamorgan . The episode was watched by 7 @.@ 57 million viewers in the UK and received generally positive reviews from critics , though the reception of the gang of characters and Solomon 's robots were mixed .

= = Plot = =

While in 1334 BC Egypt with Queen Nefertiti , after an unseen adventure , the Doctor receives a call from the " Indian Space Agency " in 2367 AD about a vast spaceship which will crash into Earth in six hours . The ISA plans to destroy it with missiles unless the Doctor stops it first . Taking Nefertiti with him , he picks up Edwardian explorer John Riddell from the African plains in 1902 AD . He then materialises the TARDIS around his companions Amy and Rory ten months after he last saw them in " Asylum of the Daleks " , inadvertently taking Rory 's father Brian on the TARDIS as well . They materialise in the spaceship and find that it contains dinosaurs .

When asking the ship 's computer for the engines , the Doctor , Rory , and Brian are transported to the " engine room " , a large beach on the ship which uses the waves as hydro @-@ power . Meanwhile , with Nefertiti and Riddell , Amy discovers that the ship is a Silurian ark designed to carry the reptilian humanoids to a new planet along with flora and fauna from their time period . It left Earth 65 million years ago to escape the meteor impact that wiped out the dinosaurs . The ship , however , registers no Silurian life forms left on board . After escaping from a group of pterodactyls , the Doctor , Rory , and Brian are escorted by two robots to the only human on board , a brutal man called Solomon who has been injured in a raptor attack and requires medical help . Scanning the Doctor to see who he is , Solomon is surprised that the Doctor does not appear in his universal database . Solomon reveals himself to be a lawless exotic black market trader who has raided the spaceship in order to steal the dinosaurs . Having had the robots murder all of the Silurians , Solomon was unable to take control of the ship himself and the computer defaulted to its point of origin , causing it to return to Earth . Discovering Queen Nefertiti 's identity and value , he decides to kidnap her and leave in his own ship . Though the Doctor refuses , Nefertiti agrees to go with him to save the others , despite the man 's obvious sadistic intentions towards her .

While Amy and Riddell shoot hostile dinosaurs with a tranquiliser gun , the Doctor disables Solomon 's robots and rescues Nefertiti , then tricks the ISA missiles into targeting Solomon 's ship rather than the ark : it is destroyed , taking him with it . Rory and Brian pilot the ark away from the Earth , as the ship can only be piloted by two people of the same gene chain . The Doctor then takes Amy and Rory back to their home after letting Brian view the Earth from orbit . Nefertiti , who has been flirting and clashing with Riddell , opts to go with him rather than return to her own time .

Amy and Rory receive a series of postcards from all over the world sent by the previously travel @-@ shy Brian , along with one featuring the dinosaurs , the TARDIS , and a sign saying " Siluria " .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing and casting = = =

Showrunner Steven Moffat said that putting dinosaurs on a spaceship was " the secret of success " . The idea to use dinosaurs in Doctor Who came from the special effects teams The Mill and Millennium FX . As " Asylum of the Daleks " was a darker opening episode , " Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " is more about fun . In Moffat 's pitch to writer Chris Chibnall , he proposed , " Maybe it 's a ship heading towards Earth , and Earth is on alert " . Chibnall had previously written the Doctor Who episodes " 42 " ( 2007 ) , " The Hungry Earth " / " Cold Blood " ( 2010 ) , as well as work for the spinoff series Torchwood . The Doctor had previously encountered dinosaurs in the 1974 serial Invasion of the Dinosaurs . Moffat suggested the spaceship was Silurian , and Chibnall , who had written the return of the Silurians in " The Hungry Earth " / " Cold Blood " , felt that it was " a nice reveal and shows you more about them , even in a story that isn ' t really about them " .

Chibnall suggested including a " bonkers " gang of characters picked from around time and space . He felt that Doctor Who could have " collisions of characters that no other show in the world can do " , and that it was about finding a " disparate " group of characters who would " bounce " off each other . Nefertiti 's decision not to return to her own time fits in with the historical record , as the date and cause of her death are unknown . Chibnall asked to introduce Rory 's father , as Amy and Rory would be leaving in four episodes and Rory 's family life had not been explored yet . Mark Williams who played Rory 's father previously appeared in the Fifth Doctor audio adventure The Eternal Summer . Rupert Graves , who played an Edwardian hunter in this episode , previously worked with Moffat on the BBC series Sherlock . David Bradley 's character , Solomon , was modelled on a " well @-@ known nightclub owner with long hair " . Chibnall described him as " half businessman , half Somali pirate " . Bradley and Williams had previously worked together on the Harry Potter film franchise . Bradley was later cast as the First Doctor William Hartnell for the 50th anniversary documentary drama An Adventure in Space and Time . Comedy duo Mitchell and Webb provided the voices of Solomon 's two robots ; executive producer Caroline Skinner called the casting choice " perfect " . Richard Hope , who played the Silurian Bleytal , previously appeared as Malohkeh in the episodes " The Hungry Earth " , " Cold Blood " and " The Wedding of River Song " .

= = = Filming and effects = = =

" Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " and the following episode , " A Town Called Mercy " , were the first episodes to be produced for the seventh series , both directed by Saul Metzstein . The two episodes are Metzstein 's first Doctor Who credits . The episode contains one of the biggest sets ever built for the show . The scenes in the " engine room " were filmed at Southerndown beach , Vale of Glamorgan in late February 2012 . The beach had previously been used as " Bad Wolf Bay " in " Doomsday " ( 2006 ) and " Journey 's End " ( 2008 ) , and as the planet Alfava Metraxis in " The Time of Angels " / " Flesh and Stone " ( 2010 ) .

The production team had to be mindful of the series ' budget when planning the effects and sets ; Chibnall commented that " it would be very easy to spend £ 300m on this but we don ' t have it " . As such , the dinosaurs could not dominate the episode , and Chibnall had to tell " a big other story " . The scene where Amy , Riddell , and Nefertiti stumble upon a sleeping Tyrannosaurus rex was almost cut as it was originally intended to feature computer @-@ generated ( CGI ) raptors , which were too expensive . However , Millennium FX realised they could use a baby T @-@ Rex that had been in an exhibit they designed . The episode contains a variety of " favourite " dinosaurs ; some were built from scratch , while others were CGI . Smith had to wear padded trousers when riding the

triceratops , and recalled it was " a painful couple of hours , a laugh though and definitely worth it " . Half of the triceratops was actually built and pushed by crewmen when Smith , Darvill , and Williams were riding it . The rest of it was filled in with CGI by The Mill . The Doctor Who logo in the title sequence featured the texture of a dinosaur 's hide , in keeping with the varied " blockbuster " themes for each of the opening five episodes of the series . A preview clip of the episode was released at the 2012 San Diego Comic @-@ Con International .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on 8 September 2012 , and on the same date on BBC America in the United States . Overnight ratings showed that it had been watched by 5 @.@ 5 million viewers live in the UK . Final consolidated ratings rose to 7 @.@ 57 million viewers . The episode also received 1 @.@ 8 million requests during the month of September on BBC 's online iPlayer , placing it second on the chart behind " Asylum of the Daleks " . It also received an Appreciation Index of 87 , considered " excellent " . In Canada , on Space , the episode was watched by an average calculation of 575 @,@ 000 viewers , making it the most watched item on the channel that week .

= = Critical reception = =

" Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " received generally positive reviews from critics , with a few detractors . Dan Martin of The Guardian described it as " fun " , with praise to the expensive @-@ looking sets and dinosaurs , the usefulness of Amy and Rory , and the concept of the gang . While he admitted it was " flimsy " and " pretty much a story built around a title " , he thought it was " the finest episode two from Doctor Who in some time " . However , he was unsettled by the underscore of darkness that was " almost disturbing enough to ruin everything " . Similarly , Charlie Anders of io9 called it " the most fun I can remember Doctor Who being in years " , while also noting gradual distancing between the Doctor and the Ponds and identifying a recurrent theme in this season : the Doctor " not being recognized " . Radio Times reviewer Patrick Mulkern was pleased that the " flawlessly realised " CGI dinosaurs redeemed the ones seen in Invasion of the Dinosaurs . He also praised Bradley 's Solomon and the " fresh slant " of having the ark built by Silurians , rather than humans as previously seen in the programme . The A.V. Club 's Keith Phipps gave it a B , finding that it was formulaic but executed well . Unlike Martin , he enjoyed the dark turns . Will Barber ? Taylor of The Consulting Detective , found the episode " A mixture between good CGI and a rather nicely paced story means that ? Dinosaurs on a Spaceship ? keeps you hooked to the end . "

Dave Golder of SFX gave the episode four out of five stars , describing it as " slight and fluffy and silly , with the occasional creaky bit of plotting ... but enormously entertaining " . He was pleased that the guest characters were played " straight " rather than for comedy , and found the dinosaur effects " great " and the Silurian twist " enriching continuity " . However , he felt that the teaser was too fast @-@ paced , Nefertiti was " rather bland " , and wrote that it was unlikely the Doctor would have a friendship with a big game hunter . IGN 's Matt Risley rated " Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " 7 out of 10 , noting that it " isn 't going to win any awards for scriptwriting or pathos , but it certainly succeeded on a family @-@ friendly level full of whimsy " . Though he wrote that Brian was " brilliant " , he overall criticised the " gang " , feeling that they " served little purpose other than to inject some conveniently timed plot devices when needed " . He also did not like the " bickering Marvin the Paranoid Android @-@ lite " robots . However , Neela Debnath of The Independent enjoyed the gang , writing , " the more companions there are the more variety it adds to the show because each one has their own flaws and backstory " .

Digital Spy 's Morgan Jeffery was more mixed , giving it three stars out of five . He described it as " rather over @-@ stuffed " , with Riddell and Nefertiti one @-@ dimensional and under @-@ used . He also criticised the robots and felt that the Doctor leaving Solomon to die might have been " a step too far " . However , he praised the three leads and Brian , as well as the foreshadowing with Amy and Rory . Gavin Fuller of The Daily Telegraph was even more negative , only rating it two stars out

of five . He described it as " ultimately a bit of a mess " , calling the contrast between the " uneasy mix of the humorous and downright daft " gang and the " sinister " Solomon story " jarring " . Fuller also noted that the dinosaurs were " a sideshow to the main plot " . Like Morgan , he also felt that the Doctor 's actions at the end would " sit uneasily within the viewers " .

= = = Continuity = = =

A reference to the film 2001 : A Space Odyssey is made when The Doctor disables the two robots on Solomon 's ship . They begin to sing the song " Daisy Bell " , a nod to the deactivation of the HAL 9000 computer in the film .