

Unlike many fans, my first taste of **Doctor Who** was actually via the Target novelisations. During the early eighties, I remember marvelling at the thousands of **Doctor Who** books which adorned a whole shelf of the local library (well OK, the “thousands” bit may be a slight exaggeration – it just appeared that way to a ten-year old!). Since I always preferred reading over television, it was inevitable that I would eventually turn my attention to the series of DW books.

The first three books were selected fairly much at random. They were *Planet of Evil*, *Horror of Fang Rock* and *The Enemy of the World*. As it turned out, the first two books scared me witless – in particular, I remember having nightmares about the anti-matter monster in *Planet of Evil*! With an ever-growing enthusiasm for **Doctor Who**, I picked up the third book in the series, *The Enemy of the World*.

Oh dear.

To say that it bored me to tears would be an understatement. I just couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. To my ten-year old mind, it all seemed very pointless and oh so boring. So there's this guy Salamander who looks like the Doctor? Big deal! All they seemed to do is talk, talk, talk all the way through the book. I mean, where was the action? Where were the monsters and the aliens? Instead, I was lumbered with this tedious, overlong (at a “lengthy” 127 pages!) chat-fest!

In actual fact, I barely made it half way through the novelisation when I was forced to retire. I therefore came to the somewhat illogical conclusion that all **Doctor Who** was pretty dreary stuff, and it was something that should be avoided in the future.

A couple of years later ...

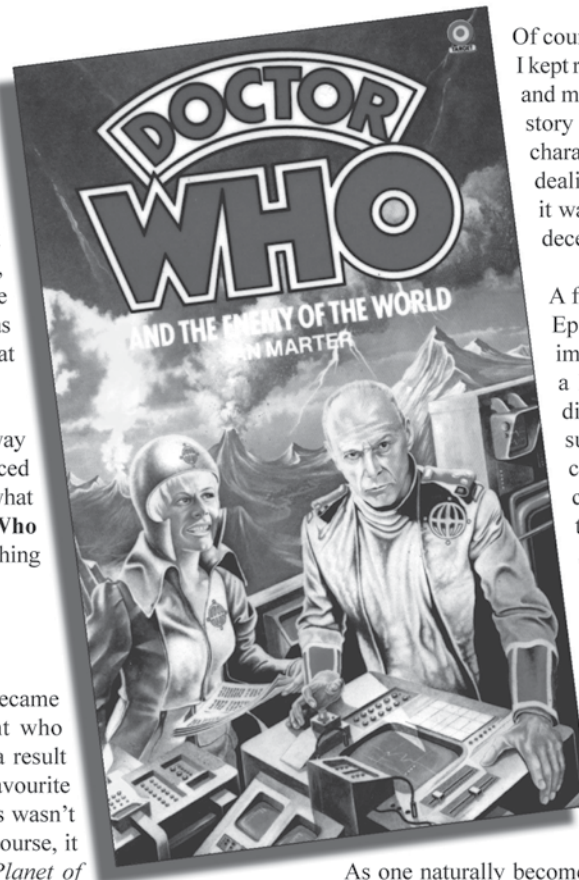
During my first year at high school, I became friends with a fellow Year 8 student who happened to adore **Doctor Who**. As a result of listening to edited highlights of his favourite stories, I decided that maybe the series wasn't as bad as I had first thought. And, of course, it made me realise that I had enjoyed *Planet of Evil* and *Horror of Fang Rock*. Therefore, perhaps I should just accept that I'd struck a dud with *Enemy*.

From that point onwards, my interest in the show really took off. I started regularly reading all the books with terrific enthusiasm (in fact, I can recall polishing off twelve books in one week!). Not long after, the ABC started screening Colin Baker's Season 22. Strange as it may seem, this was my first real taste of televised **Doctor Who** (although I had occasionally caught the odd episode in the past, this was the first time I sat down to really watch the show properly). However, at all times, I made a very conscious decision to steer well clear of *The Enemy of the World*. At no stage, would I even glance at the cover of this book for fear of it instantly diminishing my interest in the show.

As it turned out, I was able to successfully ignore the book for at least the next four or five years. As the 1980s drew to a close, I suddenly made a terrifying discovery – apart from a few books here and there, I had basically read every novelisation in the series. Then I remembered ... *The Enemy of the World* ... should I? Nah! Reading it the first time

had caused me to abandon **Doctor Who** for a couple of years. And I didn't really like the thought of being disassociated with my favourite TV series for a second time. But on the other hand, I had grown up, and had to come realise that **Doctor Who** was all about variety in story-telling. Even in my earlier days, it amazed me that one book could be set in the 25th century, while the next saw the Doctor and co gallivanting around the Scottish highlands in the 18th century. So this got me thinking ... maybe I should give *The Enemy of the World* another chance. It wasn't an easy decision, but eventually, I made the big move ...

After I'd read the first two chapters, I thought to myself, hmmm, the boring bits must be just about to appear. I actually didn't mind the first part of the book at all! In particular, there were those exciting scenes on the Australian beach – I even imagined the story to have taken place not far from where I lived. Oh well, I decided, I had better keep reading – the mindless boredom must be just around the corner ...



Of course, I never managed to find the boring bits. As I kept reading, I suddenly found myself becoming more and more engrossed in the story. It was quite a clever story really – lots of intrigue, and lots of interesting characters. I was also very impressed by the scenes dealing with the underground dwellers – I thought it was quite neat how Salamander had managed to deceive them for so many years!

A few years later, I managed to view the existing Episode 3 for the first time. I can't say I was overly impressed with what I saw – the episode seemed a little slow and dreary (as well as being very difficult to comprehend – although this is hardly surprising since the episode was not viewed in context). However, my opinion of the story changed markedly when I managed to listen to the audio for all six episodes. All of a sudden, scenes that I had previously found pointless in Episode 3, made a lot more sense! Also, I thought David Whitaker performed a terrific job in bringing so many different types of characters to life. **Doctor Who** is sometimes not noted for its characterisation, but *Enemy* succeeded admirably in presenting people who were more or less “normal” people, but still had interesting facets to them (eg Denes, Bruce, Fariah).

As one naturally becomes a little older, one's feelings towards certain **Doctor Who** stories does change. I can now say that there are a few stories that I would find a real chore to watch. However, conversely, I've learned to appreciate stories that I perhaps didn't recognise during my earlier stint with the show. And somewhere towards the top of this list, is *The Enemy of the World*. Even after listening to the story countless times when completing the reconstruction, I still find new things to discover on each successive “viewing”.

*The Enemy of the World* mightn't be everyone's idea of a rollicking good **Doctor Who** story, but for me, it's a classic example of the flexibility of the DW format. The story does have its faults (in particular, the existing Episode 3 makes it obvious how cheaply-produced the story was), but it nevertheless provides a pleasing diversion from the other “action” stories of Season 5.

And these days, I can even pick up that Ian Marter novelisation without cringing!

**BRUCE ROBINSON**

*Nothing at the End of the Lane* 1