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|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title    | An Experiment in Space and Time: Remaking the Missing Doctor Who Episode 'Mission to the Unknown'.                                                                                            |
| Type     | Article                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| URL      | <a href="https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/id/eprint/37066/">https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/id/eprint/37066/</a>                                                                                           |
| DOI      | <a href="https://doi.org/10.1386/jptv_00060_1">https://doi.org/10.1386/jptv_00060_1</a>                                                                                                       |
| Date     | 2021                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Citation | Braithwaite, Phil (2021) An Experiment in Space and Time: Remaking the Missing Doctor Who Episode 'Mission to the Unknown'. Journal of Popular Television, 9 (3). pp. 315-333. ISSN 2046-9861 |
| Creators | Braithwaite, Phil                                                                                                                                                                             |

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work.  
[https://doi.org/10.1386/jptv\\_00060\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jptv_00060_1)

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# **An Experiment in Space and Time: Remaking the Missing *Doctor Who* Episode 'Mission to the Unknown'.**

**Phillip Braithwaite (University of Central Lancashire)**

## **Abstract**

In the 1960s, the majority of *Doctor Who* (1963-89; 1996; 2005-present) episodes were wiped or lost. Students and staff at the University of Central Lancashire recently took on the challenge of remaking the missing *Doctor Who* episode 'Mission to the Unknown' (1965). The goal was to faithfully re-create the episode in a way that lays a claim to authenticity. This article examines the process and product, and asks, with reference to television historiography, whether it achieves its goal of authenticity, and what 'authenticity' might mean in this context. Ellis (2007) and others discuss the estrangement felt when viewing television from earlier decades. This article discusses the 'feedback loop' involved in *knowing* that the episode was made recently, whilst assessing it *as if it had been* made in the past. The estrangement the viewer feels is therefore a sign that the episode is succeeding in its task of staying authentic to its era. But is it possible to completely abandon the knowledge of its contemporary production and lose oneself to the experience of viewing?

**Keywords:** authenticity, television historiography, *Doctor Who*, re-enactment, practice-based research, estrangement, imperialism, nostalgia

*Doctor Who* (1963-89, 1996; 2005-present) is, and was, a television series whose central project is time travel. By travelling into different times and places, the Doctor and his/her

companions learn about history and (often) how it affects the present. The project that forms the basis of this article was also an experiment in time travel, going back to 1965 to attempt to recreate the past with all the inherent biases and assumptions preserved, as well as all the technical limitations. In this article I discuss the process and effect of recreating the missing *Doctor Who* episode ‘Mission to the Unknown’ (1965), a practice-based research project which was undertaken by students and staff at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom, in February 2019. The resulting episode premiered on the BBC’s YouTube channel on 9 October 2019. The project was helmed by Andrew Ireland, Pro-Vice Chancellor at the university with a background in television production, who directed the episode. Ireland’s intention was to be as authentic as possible in remaking the episode, staying as true as he could to the original techniques used in the 1960s, and moreover to produce an episode that looked — as near as possible — indistinguishable from an episode made in that era. The project itself had three aims: (1) to educate the students in the processes of production in the now-obsolete studio structure of the 1960s; (2) to restore this episode to the television archives, and (3) to determine whether this is a viable method of restoring *Doctor Who* episodes in the future.

Many of the *Doctor Who* episodes made in the 1960s were wiped from the BBC archives as a matter of standard practice. There are numerous reasons for this, with the cost of videotape high on the list. Another reason was what the programme-makers of the time saw as the disposable nature of the medium. Jacobs (2007) contends that television in the 1950s was perceived as ‘strictly ephemeral’ (11), and comments that the only instances in which television episodes were retained were in the case of national events that carried ‘historical significance’ (11). This short-sighted practice has resulted in a great many gaps in the television archives. Almost nothing televisual from the 1950s survives, while the records from the 1960s and even early 1970s are scant. Cooke (2003) comments that at the time,

‘There was no assumed need of an archive of television, no “repeat” value, or overseas sales thought possible’ (29). In relation to *Doctor Who*, various methods have been employed to address this problem and attempt to restore the archive, or commercially release an incomplete story. Early efforts were simple: someone (often a member of the original cast) would provide linking narration to stand in for the missing episodes. Later attempts used flash animation to remake the missing episodes — a method that continues today, aided by the fact that many of the soundtracks from the missing episodes are still extant.

Ireland had, for his PhD thesis in 2012, recreated part of an episode from the ‘new’ *Doctor Who* series, ‘Tooth and Claw’ (2006), and shot it using production techniques from the 1960s. His aims were to discover if there was any place for those now-obsolete methods in modern television, and whether television can use a hybridised form of production that is more cost-effective while surrendering nothing in terms of storytelling scope. Ireland believes that today’s methods, while presenting a far more elaborate and sophisticated outcome than their 1960s counterparts, nonetheless present their own constraints in terms of budget — the ‘look’ necessary for today’s television episodes and the technology required to produce it (filmic style, locations, computer-generated imagery) has necessitated fewer episodes per season and arguably a more limited range of storytelling. Consequently, Ireland believes, ‘we have lost something — we’ve lost the ability to tell bigger expansive stories— where drama was about the truth of performance, now it’s got to look absolutely razor-sharp’ (Ireland 2019), and the need for this production value diminishes the imaginative possibilities within budget constraints.

My aim in documenting the process of Ireland and his crew’s remake of ‘Mission to the Unknown’ and its result is to question if it is possible to faithfully re-create a piece of television originally made in the 1960s, so that it appears to be authentic (I will soon discuss

what ‘authentic’ might mean in this context). This includes the experience of viewing the episode as well as the process of making it. Aside from the finished product, how important is it to *produce* the episode according to 1960s techniques? Is it necessary to make concessions in the process of filming? A secondary question is to ask whether this is a viable method for the purposes of ‘restoring’ the archives. The cultural importance of *Doctor Who* is such that there is evidently a market for (and a cultural interest in) any kind of remake or attempt to address the missing archives. Enough television historians, archivists and commercial companies are interested to make it viable, and the fan community is vast and wide-reaching, with *Doctor Who* appreciation societies in every Anglophone country; indeed a flood of enthusiastic comments accompanied the premiere of the episode on the BBC’s YouTube site.

This article, then, is divided into three major parts: the first is the framework I am using to analyse the episode and the process. The second documents the filming of the episode: I was present throughout the filming process, interviewing key players including Dan Gilligan and Marco Simoni (lead actors), Paul Stenton (the actor who plays the central villain of the episode, Malpha), and Ireland himself. The differences between the filming that took place in this recreation and the original methods of production in the 1960s will be discussed, and I will question how close to original 1960s conditions the production process was, and whether this matters in terms of authenticity. Various criteria have been used to discuss the approach of the crew and its fidelity to the original conditions: camera, sound, lighting, acting, effects, pacing. The third part of the article will use those same criteria to discuss the efficacy of the resulting episode in terms of appearing authentic. From this I will make some observations about whether this is a valid means of filming going forward, to restore the television archive of *Doctor Who* episodes.

In the ‘process’ part of this article, the method adopted is observation as well as interpretation through the lens of historiography. The questions around authenticity are answered by interviews with key players as well as my own observation. The third part is approached in the same manner: the various technical aspects of the episode are compared with the same questions from extant contemporaneous episodes from 1965, with subjective interpretation from reviewers which have been made available online. So the question of how to approach this as both an historical text and a contemporary one is to some extent left to the reader/viewer to decide, and the episode is now freely available to view.

### **Framework for analysis**

The episode made during the week strives, above all else, to be authentic, and this is its point of difference from other methods of recreating missing episodes. The animated reconstructions of missing *Doctor Who* episodes that the BBC have produced, though effective, are not striving for authentic reproduction, but rather ‘reinvention’ through a new presentation — in colour, with the widescreen aspect ratio (16:9) that is most common today. The recent recreation of another missing serial, ‘The Macra Terror’ (1967), uses the original soundtrack, but with entirely new animations that sometimes depict characters in situations that depart significantly from the original. Ireland’s episode sets itself a different task: how to look and feel as close as possible to a product of the era in which the original episode was made. In light of that, there are some important questions to ask in this article about what ‘authenticity’ means in this context, and what constrains it as a definition (and in terms of the scope of this article). Firstly, we must differentiate between authentic *process* and *product*. Secondly, when we view the product, are we to see it as *aesthetically* authentic, or an artefact that truly reflects and represents the era from which it originally aired? These judgments will of course amount to a subjective experience in any case.

Authenticity of *process* will be covered in the first part of this article. The process is, in this case, less important than the product, because the conclusions about its merits and fidelity to the original techniques are relatively simple to determine: they are a matter of observation and understanding. If they depart from the exact conditions of 1960s production it is less relevant than whether the episode itself works as an artefact in its own right. What is far more difficult to determine is the subjective process of *viewing*. That process will determine in the end whether the product meets the challenge Ireland set himself and his team, of truly replicating the original episode as far as it is possible to do based on extant evidence — other episodes, set photos and so on.

The problem this article faces is almost completely unique. Because such an experiment has not been attempted before, there is no literature on it, though there are similar experiments. Pillai and Jackson (2020) document a similar reconstruction — to some extent influenced by Ireland's work — of the BBC's *Jazz 625* (1964-66). The authors reference Cook (2004), who theorises that a re-enactment connects us to an historical moment without *inhabiting* it. Cook claims that re-enactment is not 'about' the period being re-enacted, but about a contemporary understanding of that period, which he calls a 'historical imaginary' (Cook 2004: 494). Following Cook, Pillai and Jackson claim that their re-enactment has 'not impacted the ontological nature of *Jazz 625* as a historical and cultural artefact' (Pillai and Jackson 2020: X). Their intention was not to re-create a 'simulacrum' (X) but rather to 'refer' to the original programme and make a contemporary version that references its style and tone. Further, the authors were less interested in the product than the process of re-enactment — almost oppositional to Ireland's aims. As a contrast to Pillai and Jackson, Ireland's experiment *did* involve impacting on the ontological nature of the original and was to some extent looking to produce a simulacrum. The kind of authenticity I am looking to articulate,

then, is in the more nebulous ‘look’ and ‘feel’ of the episode – how convincingly the makers have emulated the original, in terms of *mise-en-scene*, tone, and style.

The judgment of authenticity does not involve questions of ‘meaning’ by way of sociological or ideological factors (except in a narrow sense, which I will soon outline). It therefore excludes much of cultural theory and fan theory which seeks to interpret a text through fan experience and ideological context. However, there are cultural factors embedded in the episode which must be discussed, because they are inseparable from its technical aspects.

Wheatley (2007) writes, ‘It is [...] becoming increasingly clear that one cannot separate television history out from broader social, cultural or political histories’ (4). *Doctor Who* is intertwined with the political and social history of the United Kingdom, and for this episode Ireland and his crew were required to be attentive to this history in various ways, which this article will discuss. In terms of historical analysis, Ellis writes of the historiographical approach to television studies:

It seems that there are indeed two contrasting interpretive procedures in use in the emerging field of broadcasting or television studies. One studies texts in their historical context, tying meaning to the period in which the programme was made. The other centres itself on the texts and the potential meanings that they carry, reinterpreting them through a modern optic. The tension between these approaches, the textual-historical and the immanent, is already beginning to emerge despite broadcast television’s tiny historical span of a little more than a half-century. (2007: 15-16)

We are watching this episode from the vantage point of 2020, ‘through the modern optic’, and therefore attaching new cultural meanings to it that wouldn’t have occurred to anyone in the 1960s. Ellis writes of a

[...] vague uneasinesses, a disbelief at the superficial ugliness of clothes, haircuts, furniture and decor, along with a vague discomfort at some of the working assumptions about the nature of life. [...] As a result of both nostalgia and unease, the period feels further away in time and more strange than it ever was at the time. (19)

So we are both estranged from the episode in some ways, but also able to assess its merits. This would be true of any television made in the 1960s, and obviously there is an element of suspending disbelief, not in the episode or the plot (that of course is also necessary, as it is for the vast majority of *Doctor Who* episodes, but is not relevant to this discussion), but in the experience of watching. But this nostalgia and unease performs a kind of double-percussion here, as we know this episode was made recently, but intended to appear as if it was made many decades ago. We are both assessing it *as if it were* a historical text, and simultaneously assessing its attempts to *emulate* a historical text with modern production methods. To analyse this episode as fully ‘authentic’ we must therefore pretend that we take all this for granted. This can work as a strength. The episode is indicative of its era, in ways that I will soon discuss, and so it tends to estrange, but its estrangement may be proof, in a sense, that it is functioning effectively as a true representation of its era.

There are also aesthetic considerations similar to those of the cultural question. The production methods, sound design, visual effects, and even acting styles in 1965 were substantially different to those of the modern era. We are therefore viewing the episode’s aesthetic style on its own merits, but this creates another ‘feedback loop’ wherein we are looking at reproduced effects from the 1960s as if they were made in that period. If we laugh

at a ‘bad’ visual effect, are we laughing at the incompetence of the production team’s efforts, or are we laughing in recognition of how appropriate it looks for the era? One assumes the latter, but the answer cannot be ascertained without some solid comparisons. If we find the acting too theatrical, slow, or ponderous, is that an implicit critique of the acting, or an acknowledgment that it is faithful to its emulated era? This has consequences for the production team — they want to produce something that may be estranging by today’s standards but may be entirely appropriate for the era.

Television may be what Ellis calls ‘time-tied’ (2007: 18), meaning that it was made for a specific audience to reflect the (largely) immediate and ephemeral cultural context in which it was being produced. However, certain examples of television have escaped this temporal straitjacket to become, in a sense, timeless. *Doctor Who* is one example, and it has survived in part because of its ability to re-imagine itself. It is beyond the scope of this article to fully examine why *Doctor Who* has endured, but the notion of television as a ‘time-tied’ medium has some currency here. *Doctor Who* of this era would estrange more if it weren’t connected to the more contemporary series that bears its name. To that end, there is a cultural focal point in the current series — many viewers understand the universe of *Doctor Who* — in particular, for the purposes of this episode, the Daleks.

Questions about nostalgia, estrangement or other issues related to the double-percussion outlined above, except from the perspective of an aesthetic appreciation of the episode, are up to the individual viewer. However, we can go some way towards addressing the issue of authenticity through the examination of the technical aspects and comparing them to existing contemporaneous technical aspects from other episodes made around the same time. We can also use reviews of the episode as reference points. Hopefully the combination

of these factors will be enough to convey whether the episode is ‘working’ in the more subjective sense.

The other means by which we can determine authenticity is in the episode’s reception. In order to understand when the episode has achieved its goal of authenticity in terms of product, we require a consensus of fan opinion. So for this article I will arrive at the notion of ‘authenticity’ by looking at reviewers’ interpretations of the final product. Besides the conditions of production, the only way we can decide whether this episode is authentic is by seeing if reviewers correlate on their particular reading of the text. We may then cross-reference those comments with Ireland’s intentions — his desire to visit a production-authenticity on the text.

So authenticity for the purposes of this article will amount to a faithful recreation of the episode based on extant examples from the same era. This will not include ‘meanings’, except in the ways I am about to outline, but only technical aspects (which also feed into the way the meaning is received). All the elements that estrange a viewer who is watching from a vantage point of 55 years later will remain intact, and will hopefully continue to estrange. These may include acting styles, special effects, composition, sound, fashion, and issues around cultural dominance. The authenticity will be judged to be ‘working’ if all of these factors work well enough together to emulate an episode so closely as to be convincing. Obviously it is near-impossible to fully determine this, but we can at least approximate an answer.

### **‘Mission to the Unknown’**

The episode itself was chosen because it is the only standalone *Doctor Who* episode of the original series (all other *Doctor Who* episodes of the original series were multi-episode stories), and the only one (in the original or current series) not to feature the central character

of the Doctor. This allowed the crew to sidestep casting issues: finding actors to play the roles of the Doctor and companions would have been a daunting task with an experiment like this, which already presents myriad challenges.

The episode was written by Terry Nation (creator of the Daleks) as a loose introduction to the later twelve-part serial 'The Daleks' Master Plan' (1965-66), as well as Nation's back-door attempt to sell the Daleks in their own standalone series. Some set photos of the episode are in circulation, as well as the script and the soundtrack of the original episode.

A brief synopsis of the episode is this: three space adventurers — Cory, Lowery and Garvey — land on the planet Kembel to repair their damaged ship. While there, one of them, Garvey, is stung by a plant and starts to lose his sanity, attempting to kill the other two. He returns to the ship and tries to shoot Lowery, but Cory shoots him first. Cory then explains to Lowery that Garvey was stung by a Varga thorn, which was created by the Daleks. This eventually turns the victim into a Varga plant. If Varga thorns are on Kembel, Cory surmises, that means the Daleks are probably nearby. He then reveals he is from the Space Security Force (a kind of galactic MI5), and recently Daleks have been spotted in this galaxy. Earlier he had suspected that Daleks may be on Kembel, so asked for a ship to investigate. The Daleks are indeed on the planet, and planning an attack on Earth with representatives from other planets. They become aware of the humans and go out to find them. They manage to destroy the ship, and eventually find Lowery and Cory and exterminate them. Cory was in the process of recording a message to send into space about the Daleks, but he is shot before he can send the message out.

Though, as mentioned earlier, it is outside the scope of this article to analyse the text as a sociological reflection of its era, except in terms of its connection to the present

production culture, it is worth making some comments about the episode's historical context and the assumptions therein. In the television of the 1960s there was an attempt to communicate some form of British identity interlaced with colonialism and the loss of Empire, and this was especially so in *Doctor Who*. Grady and Hemstrom (2003) write: 'A nostalgia for the power and centrality of the British empire informed the consciousness of the creative teams of the first three Doctors, and the general British television audience' (126). We can observe the 'imperial' assumptions in this episode: the ship that Cory, Lowery and Garvey are on has the emblem of a Union Jack on each rocket. The Space Security Service that Cory eventually reveals he works for may well be a British operation, implying a certain cultural dominance. Indeed, it is implied that the Space Security Service is some sort of intelligence-gathering organisation, and Cory is himself a kind of James Bond figure, recalling a certain British cultural cache, and signifying a whole other set of values relevant to the era: a narrowly-defined masculinity, as well as chauvinism and jingoism. This is particularly clear when Cory's identity card confirms he has a 'license to kill'. This connects the episode not only with the world of James Bond, but also with *The Avengers* (1961-69), a series designed to export a certain British style to America, and a series for which Terry Nation also wrote. So in recreating this episode, paying careful attention to the specific cultural mores, Ireland had to pay attention to the casting choices and the style of accent at the time, carrying with it all the implications of class and (white) male dominance, imperial associations, and social trends.

The two actors who played Lowery and Cory, Dan Gilligan and Marco Simoni, were instructed to use RP (received pronunciation) accents, and these carry with them a connection to class assumptions made at the time. Gilligan, who played Lowery, discusses this:

Back then it was even more inaccessible [than now] to working-class actors to get into the industry, so you end up having an awful lot of the middle-class actors being trained in the theatre and the techniques associated with that, and you got RP accents which are clearly of that higher society if you like. (Gilligan 2019)

At the time actors and the public might well have taken all this for granted, but we, with our ‘immanent’ view (inescapable because of the time) can’t help but notice the changes in the social climate.

Paul Stenton (who plays Malpha in the episode — one of the delegation intent on conquering Earth with the Daleks) adds:

Because of the style of acting in the 1960s, it was very sort of RP/middle class ... doesn’t matter if you’re playing an alien, or a good guy or a bad guy ...it can be quite a theatrical performance compared with TV now. (Stenton 2019)

There was certainly an attempt to present a particular type of Britain on the television in that era. White men exclusively portrayed the heroes, and usually the villains too. They were of a middle-class variety. If there were ever darker-skinned people, they were tangential characters. Women, too, were not able to participate in the masculine culture, having little agency other than their lungs with which to scream for a man’s help (though women are entirely absent in this episode). These inbuilt biases were inescapable when remaking this episode. In the end, they add to the aesthetic reception of the episode as appropriate to its era, even if perhaps they estrange in other ways — they may carry a certain alienating quality, recalling Ellis’s ‘vague uneasinesses’, and ‘disbelief’ at the different cultural assumptions of the era.

## **Process**

The filming process took place at University of Central Lancashire's (UCLan) 'Media Factory', a building designed for UCLan's students in film, television and journalism. It was shot across two studios — one containing the sets for the spaceship interior and the Daleks' conference room, and one containing the forest set with the exterior of the spaceship. **Figure 1 shows Ireland and his crew in the 'space ship' studio.**

*Fig 1: Andrew Ireland and crew in the studio.*

The episode was created over a week, with two days for rehearsal, and filming taking place over the remaining three days. There were later some model shoots. Apart from the model sequences, the whole episode was shot in the week. This differs in many ways from the conditions of the actual episodes made in the original 1960s series, which this article will discuss.

This was a production made by a crew who were largely inexperienced in the techniques of the era, so this fact must be taken into consideration. The cast and crew were mostly UCLan students, with some graduates (with the notable exception of Nick Briggs, who voices the Daleks in the current series). It also attempts to replicate production methods that are now obsolete (cameras shooting on videotape, sound recording devices, live-mixing and editing). The equipment that was used to produce the original series now either no longer exists, or exists only in museums. Therefore, modern equipment was used — digital cameras and sound recording equipment — but under conditions that replicate the original as close as possible. For these reasons, and for reasons attributable to budgets, it was not (and is not) possible to fully recreate the process as it was carried out in the 1960s. Also, of course, it is made by people who (even the oldest) do not remember the original era except through existing television examples of it.

The crew attempted to replicate the process of the 1960s as near as possible by using a three-camera set-up (though in the original studio set-up there were four), and live-mixing between shots. Though they were modern digital cameras, the crew would later apply filters to replicate the feel of the original low-resolution, analogue images. Ireland said they were trying to aim for authenticity in process as far as possible, and moreover in the look of the finished product. In his PhD thesis he compared the process to the ‘philosophy’ espoused in the movie *Jurassic Park*, writing that Spielberg’s 1993 film,

[...] provides a sobering reminder about the consequences of assuming details that don’t exist. In the film, scientists recreate extinct dinosaurs using DNA fossilized in amber – but by integrating frog DNA to fill in the ‘gaps’ left by the broken and disjointed preserved DNA. The resulting dinosaurs are somewhat different to their genuine ancestors as a result – with the ability to ‘change gender’ an obvious variance (they obtain this ability via the frog DNA). I argue that any such extrapolation of television drama relics will also provide distorted results. (2012: 45)

In re-creating this episode, it was necessary to allow for ‘best guess’ interpretations at certain points where there was no other information. This included camera shots, sound effects, visual effects and even occasional acting styles.

There were no storyboards in the 1960s: instead directors would create a floor plan, showing each movement of the camera in relation to the others. The cameras were mounted on pedestals with wheels and moved around the studio, which this experiment replicated, in-keeping with original studio conditions. Ireland constructed a basic floor plan, but not to the level of detail that his ‘60s counterparts would have done. To some extent this was because Ireland had more time — in the 1960s the episode would have been shot in its entirety in an hour and a quarter, therefore every position had to be known in advance as there was no room

for improvisation. Ireland and his crew had three days at their disposal, which allowed for more flexibility in the filming process. Ireland drew out the set, worked out the positions of the actors, and worked out most of the movements from there, using the shooting script as a guide, but also altered the arrangements if better ideas occurred to him during the shoot.

The three-camera setup fed images live into the gallery — the room where the director and sound assistants sit — and Ireland literally ‘called the shots’, ie. told the vision mixer when to switch to the next camera/shot. This is how the process was carried out in the 1960s environment. In this manner, whole scenes were shot in their entirety — a practice that is obsolete now except in sitcoms that are live-filmed. There were technical constraints that precluded the 1960s timeframe for shooting (the aforementioned hour and a quarter studio time in which to shoot the entire episode) being replicated. Firstly, the actors and crew were too inexperienced for such an undertaking. Secondly, it was technically prohibitive because the set was built over two studios, whereas in the 1960s series all sets were in the same studio space (this was not possible due to the lack of space in the Media Factory). Also, in the 1960s there was virtually no time for retakes, whereas Ireland allowed for several scenes to be shot numerous times. Ireland considers the authenticity issue a balancing act, where the practicality must be weighed against the desire to replicate the original process. In the end, Ireland attests that it is the final product that survives and hopefully continues its own life, and so concessions must be made to facilitate that end-goal (Ireland 2019).

Ireland studied many of the compositions of the stories from that era. He explains that he based his compositions on similar examples from *Doctor Who* stories at the time – mid-shot or close up, characters in two-shots, and a perspective that adds depth, with one person close to the camera and one some distance away. These techniques were used in the studio productions of the 1960s to add depth to a flat surface, and to avoid too much cutting

between cameras. Ireland adds that it ‘leads to a sort of melodrama presentation [...] I appreciate that sort of style’ (Ireland 2019). **Figure 2 shows an example of this composition.**

*Figure 2: An example of this camera arrangement from the episode*

The sound was mixed authentically to an extent. The dialogue was recorded and mixed live, including the Dalek voices. However, there was little else in the way of ‘live’ sound other than the dialogue. Whereas in the original series all the music ‘stings’ (moments of incidental music) were added into the mix live, Ireland decided to add these in post-production, because it allowed him more time to ‘tweak and play’ (Ireland 2019) in the post-production process. His emphasis was on the final product, and with an operation as complex as this, with many time constraints, it was best to minimise the possibilities of anything going wrong.

In order to play the roles ‘authentically’, the actors listened to the surviving sound recording of the episode and attempted to emulate the actors’ original performances as closely as they could. Stenton comments:

I looked at the original audio, listened to Robert Cartland’s [original actor to play Malpha] speech patterns, the way he delivered his lines, the way he enunciated certain words, and I tried to replicate exactly what he said and what he did, the pacing and everything. (Stenton 2019)

For the main roles of Cory and Lowery, Simoni and Gilligan listened to the sound recording and studied the cadences and style of the original actors, Edward DeSouza and Barry Jackson. Simoni, who plays the main role of Cory, said:

I did in my opinion a really good impression of what I was hearing. So it wasn't just an RP accent, I was trying to impersonate as best I could Edward deSouza's cadence [...] the feedback I got was, although it sounded a lot like him, it sounded too cartoony [so] instead of imitating, we have to make the character our own, otherwise it's just an impression. You don't bring any of yourself to an impression, and so it just comes across as somewhat detached. So it's sort of doing a voice, adopting an accent — the appropriate accent — and then acting as you would in that style. All of those things put together and you'll have what Andrew's striving for which is an authentic recreation. (Simoni 2019)

Adding to this, Gilligan noted:

[...] impression to a certain extent is just surface — if you want to actually understand the character and go deeper and be able to play it, you need to invest in that detail and those thought processes, the thought changes, what the objectives are of the character. (Gilligan 2019)

The final product echoes in many ways the decisions the two main actors consciously made.

On the Wednesday there was a Q&A comprising Andrew Ireland as chair, Nicholas Briggs, Peter Purves (who played the Doctor's companion Stephen Taylor in 1965-66), and Edward deSouza, who played the part of Cory in the original episode. Amongst other subjects, they discussed the differences between filming the episodes in the 1960s and now. Purves reiterated the point that the way UCLan had produced the episode was not the same as the method used in the 1960s. In that era the whole studio was on one floor and the episode was filmed continuously. He also noted that the director was required to have every shot memorised, in the correct sequential order, and Purves emphasised the director's complex

role. In the current era it would be near-impossible to replicate that process, because, as Stenton says:

The BBC were doing that at the time week-in week-out and they had the resources to do it, they were experienced at doing that, the crew were experienced; we're using students who are in second or third year, they've not worked in the industry yet, they're still learning themselves ... it would've been impossible for us to do it in a couple of hours ... we're having to use two studios on two floors, we haven't got the resources the BBC has or the space to do that [...] (Stenton 2019)

Ireland backs this point, commenting, 'It would've been a brilliant experience having done it in an hour and a quarter, but the end-product would've been a by-product and not something which would live on in its own right' (Ireland 2019). Thus, for Ireland and the crew, the more important outcome was the product.

Within the parameters of what they had to work with, Ireland and his team were as authentic as they could be to the process. In the original series there was little room for retakes if someone made a mistake. The actors in Ireland's production were given several opportunities to perfect the scene, which is more in-keeping with a contemporary approach. The episode was shot out of sequence, though this was partly due to practical considerations — the two separate studios altered the order of shooting. Where they could they stayed as true to the original process as possible — they used three cameras, positioned them, live-cut between them, and recorded dialogue on set. They did not record the music on set, which differs from the original method. But Ireland was always clear that the process would not be fully authentic, because of the lack of skill, experience, money and equipment, and he didn't want the product to suffer. Indeed, there is little need to replicate the conditions of production

exactly as they were, because what matters, arguably, is the product. The real test then, is whether this episode ‘looks’ and ‘feels’ like it was made in the 1960s.

## **The Episode**

The resulting episode was shown to a group of people who worked on the episode at UCLan, and has now been released on the BBC’s YouTube channel. In viewing the episode, it is clear the lengths to which Ireland and his crew went to replicate the look of the original episodes of that era. What follows is a comparison between the technical aspects of this episode and other episodes that still exist from the 1960s, to answer the question of how close the makers came to replicating the aesthetics of the original. Where possible, the questions are addressed subjectively by reviewers.

Many photos of the original sets for the episode are still in existence, so Ireland and his crew had a lot to work with. Design students and local furniture makers worked together to build the sets as close to the original as possible. This was not the case with the inside of the space ship — only one picture exists of that, so there was more need for imaginative, interpretive work — but it is for the exterior. Ireland mentions that their version was smaller than the original, but the difference was minor. The Dalek control room set was the most difficult to construct because it was so large and the crew’s budget could not extend to it. So Ireland filmed this as a model shot instead (there were no humans in this sequence, only Daleks). However, he believes this is consistent with the series, where model shots had been used on occasion.

The costumes and makeup are also very close to the original because there are a number of pictures of the original arrangement. In part this was due to the leaving party for

Verity Lambert, *Doctor Who*'s first producer, which happened to coincide with the making of this episode, so there are photos of the 'alien' actors from this event in their costumes. There is also a photo of the alien delegates crowded around the table. The shots of the conference room closely approximate what can be seen in the publicity photos that survive. Figure 3 shows the original conference room alongside the version created by the UCLan crew.

*Figure 3: On the left, original 1965 production still of Dalek delegation (Credit: BBC Photo Library), on the right: UCLan remake*

There are several examples of framing that emulate the original. In many instances Ireland opted for a two-shot, wherein one character was close to the camera and one in the background. This eliminates the need for the traditional 'shot/reverse shot', wherein the camera cuts between two people talking to each other, and allows for a large section of dialogue to be spoken in a single shot. **Figure 4 contrasts Ireland's framing with an example from the original series — 'The Time Meddler' in 1965.**

*Figure 4: on the left, 'The Time Meddler', (UK 1965) (Credit: BBC Photo Library), on the right, UCLan remake of 'Mission to the Unknown' (2019)*

The performances are, in most cases, very close to the original. Lee Thacker writes: 'the two leads [...] give wonderfully stiff upper-lipped, Received Pronunciation (or 'BBC English') turns' (Thacker 2019). It is possible to play the original audio track of the episode over the top of the new re-created episode. Ireland used the original soundtrack as a guide while editing the episode, and the pacing of the performances match very closely to the original, so that the running time for the original and the reconstruction were almost identical.

The lead actors' performances strike a balance between fidelity to the original (especially in terms of accents), and the actors' own interpretation. Peter Nolan writes in his review of the episode that the actors 'step seamlessly into the roles and their interpretation of that particular 1960s brand of clipped, earnest heroism' (Nolan 2019).

The two major effects of the episode are of Garvey turning into a Varga plant, and the Daleks destroying the ship. For the latter, Ireland was guided in part by the script, which reads:

*Cory and Lowery watch helplessly as the ship disintegrates under the Daleks' fire.*

*Image turns negative. Stays negative as cut to Lowery and Cory before returning to normal.*

So for this effect Ireland and his crew simply shot the Dalek's gun in close-up, then the screen turned negative as the script specifies, and then smoke effects were applied to the ship, so that smoke poured out of it (See Figure 5). Figure 6 shows a similar sequence from 'The Daleks' (1963-64), in which the screen turns to negative.

*Figure 5: sequence showing the Daleks destroying the ship*

*Figure 6: sequence from 'The Daleks', 1963-64 (Credit: BBC Photo Library)*

The effect of Garvey turning into a Varga plant was much more difficult to achieve. The only assistance the script offers is this:

*Garvey is lying on the ground. Feet and legs twitch as if alive. They become still.*  
*Track into one of the feet and legs and hairs appear. Garvey moves to stand and we*  
*stay on the legs until he is up, then tilt up to reveal the top half has been transformed*  
*into a shapeless Varga plant, covered in hair and thorns.*

The technique Ireland chose was to use vision mixing, perfected in post-production, to show Garvey standing up and the image of a Varga plant overlaid or superimposed on top of his image. This gives the impression of Garvey ‘morphing’ into the plant. Ireland comments that, while this technique was used in the 1960s (for the TARDIS materialising, as an example) it was less common, and so it pushed to the limits what could be considered authentic in this era. This technique was chosen partly because of time constraints, and partly because there wasn’t time to create a third costume that would have shown Garvey as half-man half-Varga, and in any case Ireland doubted how effective it would be.

The episode does retain all the alienating qualities of television drama, that will tend to estrange a contemporary viewer — attitudes, styles: the ‘vague uneasiness’ that Ellis refers to. They are no less estranging simply because they are produced by a modern group for a modern audience. Martin Belam in his review for the *Guardian* writes, ‘Inevitably, given the source material, it is a bit stilted, stagey and even slapstick at points’ (2019). This ‘staginess’ is testament to its authenticity. The most prominent alienating qualities in this episode are around the perceived or implied supremacy of Britain. But there are also confusing references to Earth and the Solar System, as Nolan points out, ‘[Malpha’s] interchangeable use of “solar system”, “galaxy” and “universe” as all meaning pretty much the same thing can be brought to a whole new generation to scratch their heads over’ (Nolan 2019). These elements, including all the anachronisms and inconsistencies, are effectively working in Ireland’s

episode, which is a testament to the performers — there is never any sense of parody, nor of undue reverence, but merely a truthful engagement with the work.

The question of whether it feels like it was made in the 1960s — whether the viewer can suspend their disbelief in this manner — has been addressed in many of the reviews. James Aggas believes, ‘Everything from the sets, to the effects, to even the black and white look convince extremely well [...] It’s incredibly authentic’ (2019). Thacker in a review writes, ‘The look of it is rather startling, in terms of just how much at times it appears like it was actually made over five decades ago’ (2019). Nolan writes that the recreation ‘is such an authentic slice of 1960s television that if you sat someone unfamiliar with the story in front of it and told them it was the genuine article, they’d likely believe it’ (2019). Thacker seemed to find Stenton’s version of Malpha a step too far, claiming Stenton ‘gives a rendition so wooden, they could’ve built the set using him’ (2019), yet this may well be a testament to the ‘estranging’ quality which is a mark of authenticity, and as Nolan points out:

[...] listening to the original audio, this captures perfectly how Robert Cartland played the part [of Malpha] in 1965 [...] It’s probably the greatest opportunity to reappraise a *Doctor Who* villain ever. (2019)

There is a certain quality that separates this episode from examples of 1960s *Doctor Who*, and that is, ironically, that it is too good. The images and sound are clear and crisp. It may be that most or all of the surviving episodes of *Doctor Who* from the 1960s are extant because they have been crudely filmed from television using amateur equipment, or more often they are the result of the kinescope process, in which episodes were ‘filmed’ by pointing a film camera with 16mm film at a television set and recording it as a way to free the expensive videotape for re-recording. This process reduced the quality of the image and sound considerably, though there are now attempts to ‘clean up’ some of these episodes using

digital techniques. The ‘problem’ may also be due to the difference in quality between digital and analogue equipment. It is no longer practically achievable to make television with non-digital equipment, at least not in post-production, and therefore there is a difference in the quality of image and sound. So Ireland’s episode, though remaining very close to the look and feel of 1960s *Doctor Who*, loses something in the high quality of its images and sound. However, there would be ways to rectify this, perhaps by duplicating the kinescope process or something similar.

As a one-off university project, the making of this episode was a success on its own merits, and does produce an episode that feels authentic, at least to the writers who have reviewed and discussed it publicly. However, the question that remains is whether this could be done on a more industrial scale. Many in the fan community believed this was the best way of restoring the archives. The process itself is relatively inexpensive and makes limited demands on time. An episode can be made in a week, as Ireland and his crew have proven. But the main reasons this project worked as a self-contained piece were: firstly, it was the only standalone episode in the classic-era *Doctor Who* canon, and secondly because it did not feature the character of the Doctor or his companions. The complication that would be faced by anyone wishing to pursue this technique over longer stories is in the casting. An actor would have to be a convincing stand-in for Hartnell’s version of the Doctor. However, this ‘trade-off’ would seem minor compared to the prospect of having the episodes (to some extent) restored, and indeed the actor David Bradley has ‘officially’ played the character recently, as well as Richard Hurndall in the 1980s, so there is a precedent for recasting. All of these factors point to the possibility of more episodes being re-created using this method.

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### **List of Television Programmes**

*The Avengers* (UK: ITV/ABC/Thames, 1961-69)

*Doctor Who* (UK: BBC, 1963-89; 1994; 2005-present)

    'The Daleks' (21 December 1963-1 February 1964)

    'The Time Meddler' (3-24 July 1965)

    'The Daleks' Master Plan' (13 November 1965 to 29 January 1966).

    'Mission to the Unknown' (9 October 1965).

    'Tooth and Claw' (22 April 2006).

## **Contributor Details**

**Philip Braithwaite** is an award-winning playwright, and a lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire. He teaches creative writing, as well as literature and media studies. In addition to creative writing work, his research interests include the convergence between politics and popular culture. He is currently writing about Thatcherism and science fiction television.

**Contact Address:** 74 Winchester Avenue, Lancaster LA1 4HX

**Email:** PBraithwaite1@uclan.ac.uk

**Orcid link:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8349-6448>