

The Black Archive #2

THE MASSACRE

SAMPLER



By James Cooray Smith

Dodo differs from all her predecessors as **Doctor Who**'s female lead in that she's entirely located in the then modern world. In *The Celestial Toymaker* she sports a Dylan cap, a hooped top and a miniskirt: an outfit you can easily imagine on Jo Grant or Clara Oswald, but not Barbara or Vicki. In *The Ark* she uses Beatle slang ('Gear!') and talks about a school trip to Whipsnade (a place surely familiar to much of **Doctor Who**'s audience from exactly that sort of trip, or at least from features on **Blue Peter**). Ian and Barbara are grown-ups, in loco parentis to the audience. Vicki, Steven and Sara are from the future and Katarina is from Troy, while Susan is an unearthly child. Dodo, though, is a thoroughly modern Miss. For the first time in **Doctor Who**, we have a companion who comes from real life.

Right from her first scene, Jackie Lane creates someone distinctive and relatable despite being hampered by conflicting direction about the accent she should play the character with, and makes Dodo, bright, quick, compassionate, and funny. There's also genuine chemistry within the Hartnell-Purves-Lane trio and Dodo, as a swinging 60s Londoner, contrasts far better with Steven Taylor, Pilot of the Future, than Vicki the 25th-century orphan did. (The same applies with the Jamie/Zoe team, which works better than Jamie/Victoria for exactly the same reason. 'The girl is from the future and the boy is from the past?' asks an incredulous German soldier in *The War Games* (1969). Yes, indeed. And that contrast, or its mirror image, is a useful one.)

The archetypal **Doctor Who** companion is a fashionable woman from contemporary Earth (often contemporary London) who is attractive to the audience both as an identification figure and, frankly, an object of lust. She usually has a (sometimes frustrated) desire to do great things, a complicated family background and is strongly empathetic in order to provide a contrast with the more alien aspects of the Doctor.

Whatever the merits or otherwise of that character type, it's fair to say that most casual viewers of modern **Doctor Who** would recognise this as a description of Rose, Martha, Donna, Amy and Clara, but it also applies to Ace, Peri, Tegan, Polly, Jo Grant and Sarah Jane Smith. Dodo is the first **Doctor Who** regular character to demonstrate any aspects of this character type.

Innes Lloyd wrote to Lane after she finished work on **Doctor Who**, specifically tell her that she'd done nothing wrong, and that she was a victim of circumstances. That's disingenuous up to a point, as it was his decision not to continue to employ her, and keeping her in the job was within his gift, but it nevertheless points to something important. Early ideas for *The War Machines* retained Dodo and paired her with a character called Rich, a prototype version of the Ben Jackson character introduced in the transmitted story. Rich and Dodo were to be what Ben and Polly ultimately were, a pair of **Doctor Who** companions from contemporary London who reflected the birth of British cool.

Dodo wasn't being replaced by a completely different sort of character, she was being replaced with a new but actually very similar character, one who is superficially distinct but actually duplicates a lot of Dodo's innovatory contemporary appeal. They are, in fact, so similar, that Dodo very nearly stayed on to do Polly's job for her. It may be that Dodo's origin as another orphan figure and granddaughter substitute prevented her from completely fulfilling the role Polly occupied and which remains the **Doctor Who** companion archetype to this day, but she is not merely a step towards it, she is its first exponent.

Dodo is one of the most important characters in the entire history of **Doctor Who**.