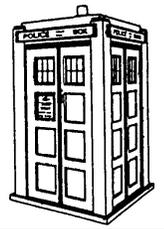


# Council Times



Newsletter of the Buffalo Time Council

March-April 1999

## DOCTOR WHO

### THE CURSE OF THE FATAL DEATH

## Rowan Atkinson As Ninth Doctor In BBC Spoof for Comic Relief UK

Review by David Ennis

On Friday, March 12, television audiences in England and others throughout the world, thanks to an Internet simulcast, were treated to the first new Doctor Who presentation since the FOX telefilm in 1996. Much like the broadcast of *Dimensions in Time* in 1993, ***Doctor Who and the Curse of the Fatal Death*** was a twenty minute parody shown in four parts during Red Nose Day, BBC's on-air fundraiser for Comic Relief UK. Unlike *Dimensions in Time*, this special contained none of the actors from the series. Instead, it relied on an all-star cast led by Rowan Atkinson (Mr. Bean, Black Adder) as the ninth Doctor.

The story, without giving too much away, involved the Doctor and his companion Emma, portrayed by Julia Sawalha (Saffron from Absolutely Fabulous), meeting the Master, played by Jonathan Pryce (Bond villain Elliott Carver from Tomorrow Never Dies), and his Dalek allies on the planet Tersurus. Along the way, viewers saw fart jokes, innuendo, and celebrity cameos by Richard E. Grant, Jim Broadbent, Hugh Grant, and Joanna Lumley. The rest: "I will explain later."

*Curse of the Fatal Death* successfully managed to have fun with the Doctor Who format, while still treating the subject with respect. Most of the credit for this belongs to writer Steven Moffat (British teen drama Press Gang, which starred Sawalha) whose DW material in the short story collection *Decalog 3* was also well written. Everything is in the story for a reason, and those reasons are wonderfully coherent.

Jonathan Pryce gave the best performance of the Master since the Pertwee era, and I really want to see him in the role again in a non-parody. It can be said that Atkinson's Doctor was identical to his work in Black Adder, but that doesn't matter since it worked for this script. The rest of the acting was far better than I would have expected from just a parody.

I really enjoyed the special, and it appears viewers agreed. Reports indicate that it was the highest-rated portion of the Red Nose Day telecast, with 9.8 million viewers for the first episode. While the number of viewers was down by episode three, each episode also rated higher than the material surrounding it.



Photo: Radio Times (06-12 March 1999)

## Buffalo Time Council Holds Friday Room Party At EerieCon

In the tradition of our very successful Contradiction parties, **Buffalo Time Council** will host a Friday night room party at **EerieCon One** in Niagara Falls, New York; April 16<sup>th</sup>. (Check out the full-page ad for EerieCon One inside for more on the convention)

This will be a great way to start off your weekend at this year's only fan-run literary SF event in this area. You need not have a Friday con membership to attend our party, but all other convention events on Friday will require a badge.

To avoid the hotel's catering fees, we will only serve cold items. We usually have a lot of food, much of it even nutritious! The beer (contributed by Dennis Blake) is strictly for adults, 21 or older.