Absolutely Fantastic!!! Some Of The Best Writing In Dr. Who History!

This book collects together the entire shooting scripts for the first series. Seven of the scripts are by Russell T. Davies, with the remainder by Steven Moffat, Robert Shearman, Paul Cornell and The League of Gentlemens Mark Gatiss. Each story contains the essential ingredients of time travel, adventure, and the mixing of the ordinary with the fantastical that have always characterized the series, while at the same time being thoroughly in tune with contemporary culture and society. This is a Doctor Who for an age defined by irony, technology, celebrity, and the shadow cast by 9/11. It is also a more cinematic series, with fast cutting and special effects that will satisfy viewers brought up on contemporary film and television sci-fi.

My Personal Review:
One of the (many) major problems with the new Doctor Who is that there are no Target novelisations of the episodes... The shooting Scripts comes close, although it has very little extra content like the old Target books did.

The Shooting Scripts is well put together for the most part, instead of direct photocopies of the actual script pages, the stories are placed in the book in a more reader friendly format with several color pictures from the series placed on virtually every page. Actor direction is still present in a slightly simplified form, but notes, rewrites, and omitted scenes have been purged. This is the only downfall in what could have been a perfect book.

As expected, there are some notes by the people involved at the beginning of select stories. They are not very detailed and reveal nothing that hasn't already been said about the new series. If you are already a fan then you aren't really going to learn anything new.

The scripts themselves are rather simple. Russel T. Davies writing style is truly that of a First Drafter. Most of the time you get the sense that he typed it up from beginning to end without even considering the idea of giving the work a second look. If he did, it was only with spell checker on his computer. I think we were all too blown away and excited by Doctor Who being back at the time that we didn't notice the plot holes and
(honestly) sometimes lame direction that Davies was taking the new show in.

That said, most of the scripts read like classic Dr. Who during the Peter Davison and Sylvester Mc Coy years. Take out the loud thumping music and the video filters put on in post production and it would be just like old Dr. Who... and this is where the book comes in very handy. During the first two "new seasons" of the series, the music and sound effects made it nearly impossible to make out some of the dialogue. With this you can read what you missed every time the show got to be too loud and impressed with itself.

Yes it was big, brash, and bold, which was fine, but it was also very hard to hear what the actors were saying. Especially bad is Billie Piper, who mumbles many of her lines, and seems to be the only person in her family with a thick lazy accent. In the second season she has even more trouble forming words and making them pass over her huge cow fat injected lips, sometimes becoming totally inaudible. Too bad the TARDIS can't translate her for us! Unfortunately, this book only covers the first season, so unless there is a volume 2 published, many lines of dialogue will never be known.

Of great importance in this book is the study value. Many fans of the series were indifferent on the doctor-companion relationship, as well as the ending kiss. It isn't a running theme through the first season scripts and is tacked on at the end for what can only be called shock value. I believe that if Russel T. Davies wasn't a first draft script writer, he would have removed or rewritten many scenes and plot points in his scripts, and we would have gotten a much better and evenly paced Doctor Who.

This downfall in his writing ability, brought on I assume by his bloated ego or belief that every word he types is brilliant because nobody in production will say otherwise, has brought about some of the most lame, unbelievable, and downright ridiculous plot points ever seen on television. Season two we have a Doctor Who love story with one of the most annoying endings ever. Season three had an ending that was totally embarrassing. And in season four he gave Billie Piper her own Doctor Who action figure to play with and the TARDIS becomes a tow truck.

There are several reasons why this is important in a review of the first season shooting scripts. First off, Davies wrongly believed he had to top the first seasons ending by making the next one even bigger and more dramatic. Not a good idea for a first drafter! In reading the scripts it appears that he simply ran out of time or effort to close the first series properly, especially with Christopher Eccleston leaving the title role. The Daleks, who managed to wipe out Gallifrey and every planet in between, are totally defeated in the span of three minutes by this bleach blonde with some absorbed Tardis energy. Wow... Try not to think about this ending too hard, but didn't the timelords have millions of time capsules and billions of people? Couldn't one of them come up with the idea of looking into a "tardis heart" and wipe out the daleks a long frickin time ago? As I said, plot holes and poor writing.

This isn't to say that the other scripts are poor, in fact much of Davies writing is very good, so long as it's not a continuing plot line that carries
over into other episodes or a major plot point that builds to the season ending.

The other writers from the first season are much more polished and deliver more complete scripts. Steven Moffat, assuming that he has to work around Davies' dangling plot threads, constantly comes up with fantastic scripts. The exception being the fourth season two parter which was written around a big name guest star and had yet another love interest for the Doctor.

Sadly, after four and a half years the series appears to be on an irreversible downward spiral, locked into love stories featuring companions with lovey-dovey eyes and those bigger than life endings that turn out to be total garbage and a direct insult to the viewers. Now they've hired a much younger man (Matt Smith) to play the lead role and it truly can only get worse. With this book one can see where it went right and where the seeds of the current state of Doctor Who were planted. There's also a brief glimpse into what might have been if there had been some reigns placed on Russel T. Davies.

It's stated in the book that the new series was approved sight unseen. The BBC allocated a budget and gave full approval without a pilot or even a draft script. Without Russel T. Davies the series could have been a total disaster so we do have him to thank for that. On the other hand the BBC should have put people who weren't fans of Davies (or butt-kissers) in the positions of script editor, producer, and executive producer. What we would have gotten was a far more balanced show and a lot less of the crap. It could have been a series that would stand on its own and continue on it's merits rather than relying on it's long and great history and loyal fans who will continue to watch regardless of how stinky it is.

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