

The Empty Children - Episode 4 - Aliens of London and World War Three (S1.4-5)

Maddy Searle

Hello and welcome back to the Empty Children, a podcast all about the Russell T Davies eras of Doctor Who both past and future. I'm your host, Maddy Searle and my pronouns are she/her. And with me, I have my excellent co-hosts with whom I'm sharing this journey through time and space. And could I please get you all to introduce yourselves with your names and pronouns starting with Rachel?

Rachel Smith

Hi, my name is Rachel Smith. My pronouns are she/her.

Maddy Searle

And James.

James Barbarossa

Hi, I'm James Barbarossa, and my pronouns are he/him.

Maddy Searle

And Zack.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Hi, I'm Zack. My pronouns are also he/him.

Maddy Searle

Fantastic. And before we move on to the episode itself, please be aware that this podcast may contain spoilers from any episode from the Russell T Davis era, and possibly beyond. So consider this your personal warning for me, and River Song. And this week, we will be discussing series one episodes four and five, Aliens of London and World War Three. They were broadcast on the 16th and 23rd of April 2005, respectively. And they were written by Russell T. Davies, and directed by Keith Boak. In this episode, the Doctor brings Rose back home to London a little later than they'd intended, and discover that a bunch of farty aliens have taken over Downing Street. So I would like to start by getting people's general thoughts, as always, on this particular episode. So Rachel, what were your thoughts?

Rachel Smith

Um, I think, for me, weirdly, this was, or these two were the episodes that I vaguely remember, like, having not watched it for a really long time, it's like the ones that I'm like, oh, yeah, they happened. And then didn't give a great deal of, of a thought to you beyond that, like, there's a lot of episodes that I think about in a lot more detail, and reminisce about a lot more, and I sort of just often forget that they're there. And watching them again, I actually found myself appreciating them a lot more than I think I

previously did. And it was interesting, because I think there was this sort of thing that we've talked about a little bit before as well of like, oh, Doctor Who was better before it was political. And it's like there's... There's so many like little political moments in this that are not just... obviously it's set in 10 Downing Street, like sure there's gonna be... but there's there was some references like Blair's Babes, and...

James Barbarossa

This is the- this is all one massive Iraq War, like Iraq War analogy. Yeah.

Rachel Smith

Right? Just like the weapons of mass destruction storyline. It's just like, Oh, okay.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Excuse me. I think you'll find they said massive weapons, Doctor Who's never been political.

Rachel Smith

Yes. Yeah, of course

Maddy Searle

Just big-ass weapons.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Please, Rachel, please consider it, consider it.

Rachel Smith

Sorry, I'm completely wrong. It's not in any way political, there are no references to the contemporary politics of the time in this episode. It's completely detached from anything to do with the Blair cabinet. It's fine.

Maddy Searle

The fact that a prominent landmark in London was destroyed very publicly and in sight of everyone is not at all political or a reference to 9/11 at all.

James Barbarossa

Not a reference to anything. And certainly in no way part of a long decades-long history of every science fiction thing after 2001 being a 9/11 reference.

Maddy Searle

Yeah.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That's true.

Maddy Searle

For sure. I think there's an interesting Lindsey Ellis video about the influence of 9/11 on films after 2001, which is very good.

James Barbarossa

I might have watched that. I don't know. But it's been a major interest in my sci fi writing for a while.

Maddy Searle

Yeah. And Zack, what are you thinking?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I, likewise, really enjoyed this episode. I think there are aspects of it that I think could have been better, specifically in how the third act was structured of the story. It kind of felt like in the third act of this thing, we- it really plateaus in terms of like th- in terms of what's going on in the action, moving about, it kind of feels a bit stagnant. And that might come down to the fact that they're stuck in one room most of the time. But that having been said, the concepts and the theming work on display here are excellent. The conversations that are had are excellent. I just don't think I loved this story as a whole as much as I've loved previous other stories. That being said, my god, the opening few scenes before the aliens even arrive just dealing with Rose accidentally having been gone for a year. Oh god. Some of the best, I think, honestly, this does feature some of the best individual moments and great building blocks. But for me, I'm not sure if it comes together as a wholly satisfying package. Like some of the other episodes do, I still do really like it and still do think it's really good. Don't get me wrong. This is still masterful work. But in comparison to some of the other stories that we've had thus far, I just don't think it comes together quite as well as the others.

Rachel Smith

I think for me, like that's one of the reasons why I don't tend to think about these couple of episodes as much as some of the others because it does have those issues that don't bring it up to that same standard.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah.

Maddy Searle

I feel kind of similarly about this two parter, as I do about the season four two parter with the Sontarans. Like generally the sorts of the episodes that are about big Earth incursions and lots of political factions getting involved, they tend to not connect with me quite as much as the more low key small cast episodes. Yeah, James, what are you thinking?

James Barbarossa

Well, I mean, I think I'm gonna probably disagree with you guys on this one because I think this one's really good.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I didn't say it wasn't really good. I want to be clear, I still think it is really good.

James Barbarossa

Well dunno, I dunno!

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I, no, I explicitly did say that.

James Barbarossa

Sure. Sure. Sure. I thought the third act was- I thought it was great. I thought that the- I thought the like Mickey and Jackie kind of- the like way all of them are dealing with sort of the horrifying reality of like having to perform a nightmarish military action, even one that's just a smallest, like, apparently just popping like a one house sized missile. But like it's still like- they're all like like the codes and firing off the missile, and sitting there and having to like, somebody has to make the call and like Harriet Jones as the only elected one and even it comes down to like Jackie still is like essentially making the final decision to like I guess not smack Mickey with a baseball bat or something, and stop him from firing the missiles at Rose and stuff. I thought the third act was great. I guess to me, see, I always think of this episode as like being a staple of this season. Possibly because I think this might have been the first ones I actually watched. I didn't watch series one from the beginning while it was coming out. I joined at some point in the middle and I've never able to put it down to exactly which ones but I think it was this one and even back then I was like, oh it's this like stressful tense... we're all trapped in this one like building and like what are the aliens, you know? They're masquerading as politicians, this like complex web. And even though it's not like the small sort of highly character driven exclusively scene-like episode, I still think these bit these big ones have their value and I think the scenes with the Doctor and Harriet Jones as a character, and Mickey and Jackie's relationship, I think they capture a lot of the magic of like the small character driven ones. But as part of a, you know, there's a place for the small character driven and ones that and there's a place for the big alien incursion ones.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, for sure.

James Barbarossa

And I think this one is possibly one of the most well executed big alien incursion ones. Certainly a lot better than The Sontaran Stratagem.

Maddy Searle

Fair. Yeah, I think I definitely agree with a lot of what you guys have been saying, I really enjoy the Jackie/Mickey/Harriet Jones character interactions. But I just feel like the Slitheen just make me slightly uncomfortable for various reasons and haven't quite aged as well as they might have done. Because...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

They look, they look and move amazingly, in their terrible VFX. The movement in those terrible VFX. Oh!

Maddy Searle

Yeah, yeah, I made very specific notes about how they are only in VFX in wide shots along corridors when they're doing that loping run.

James Barbarossa

And they, they use a lot of the same animation when they're coming out of the suit. They use the same animation a couple of times. And when they're running and loping across the rooms, they use the same animation. I really like when they're running across the rooms. I like sort of Alien style like like Xenomorph style aliens a little every so often, you know.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, as a treat. Let's start off by looking at Rose in this episode. So she's back after 12 months, not 12 hours which is a big deal.

James Barbarossa

Yeah!

Rachel Smith

Just a slight difference.

James Barbarossa

I really like how big of a deal like, the like, yeah, it's like horror. The music is horror music when they're like realising she's been away for 12 months. I remember just sort of, like, you know, long before I was really had watched much story as a kid, sort of being very palpably aware of the horror of like, her being just separated from life by a year, and not knowing that she had been and everybody thought she was dead. You know. And I think that the music does a really- is a massive part of that. I can definitely see how with like, if you did, if you subbed that music in for like plinky double bass, you could be like, this is funny, isn't it? But instead they're like, what if the massive disruption to a human's life was- actually mattered? You know? It's good.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, it feels- it feels like everything has real world consequences in the series, like, the fact that you've had a couple of episodes where they've had a really fun adventures in the TARDIS. And it's all been very disconnected from anybody outside of Rose and the Doctor as a little unit. And then suddenly, it comes in really hard with actually, Rose is still a person with a family that cares about her, with friends that care about her and her vanishing, even though she thinks, you know, especially because she only thinks she's gone for a few minutes, like for a few hours, her vanishing has a huge impact. And there are consequences to that. And there are consequences to getting this wrong. And it gives any of the decisions that she then makes as a character and the other characters make they actually give some real world weight in a way that makes them mean something.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah, it's so wonderful to see the consequences of the adventures but also, because this is so good, and the consequences and the implications of how the world keeps going on, because that's all explored to quite a thorough extent, you've burned this now, for every other companion going forward. No one else can do it as good as this and you can't retread this ground again. Which is unfortunate, because it's so good. But I get why as the show moves forward from this point, that the companions start more easily becoming detached from their lives.

James Barbarossa

Yeah, future companions vanish off the face of the earth and hardly anyone bats an eye.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Because you can't do this every time with every new...

James Barbarossa

I don't know. But you could do things... You could do it differently. You could you could still, like you could definitely still spend time dealing with the companions lives.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I don't know how- tell me if they've done this. But I'd be really fascinated to see a companion's emotional journey when they've accidentally left for like a year. And no one notices.

James Barbarossa

Yeah.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

And then be, and then realising their place in their own world. That would be a good- I think that would be

James Barbarossa

That nobody realises that they've been gone?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah, and they are really offended by that, they think people are gonna have this big reaction. But everyone's like, "Oh, okay."

Maddy Searle

That would be interesting.

James Barbarossa

I think the palpability of this ending with like Jackie and Mickey waiting and like, Mickey's horrified face, as he sort of realises that actually he doesn't know if she's dead, right now he doesn't know if she's dead or not. Because they don't come back.

Rachel Smith

One of the things that I really appreciated about these two episodes was a lot of the like little side things that were happening around the Doctor and Rose like when they go back to Jackie's to go and watch the stuff on the news and like everybody in the neighbourhood has come around and Jackie and her friends are still having these very normal conversations about, "Oh well did you see what happened over there, oh..."

Maddy Searle

"So and so asked me out!"

Rachel Smith

Right? Like and they're just so focused on like they're normal and like the kid who's changing the channel and the dot and even the sort of the moment that you see...

James Barbarossa

Bit of Blue Peter... alien spaceship.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, the Matt Baker on Blue Peter making a cake star-ship. Which is amazing. And like when the Doctor goes outside, and there's all those people like on the balcony drinking and they've got the huge banner that they've painted. Oh, "The aliens have London" was what they've written on this massive banner and they were just getting drunk.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

"The aliens have London"!

Rachel Smith

Right? It's just like yeah, that's, that's so the way that that would pan out.

Maddy Searle

Any excuse to have a lot of booze people will take it.

James Barbarossa

And then a bunch of- and then a bunch of people are like sitting around and complaining about the traffic.

Rachel Smith

Yeah!

James Barbarossa

"Ken Livingstone, innit? Gotta be."

Rachel Smith

I love that bit with "Ken Livingstone, innit?"

James Barbarossa

"Gotta be Ken Livingstone, innit?"

Rachel Smith

"Fuck Ken Livingstone!"

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

What a good- it is a great pair of episodes, like no denying. It's interesting with Rose in this episode, how she does get an opportunity to see the consequences of her actions firsthand, and actually cries and feels it and feels that guilt. But still goes back in the end. Yeah.

Rachel Smith

And I love as well, like, she's just been away. And the Doctor said, Oh, you've been away 12 hours, and she's come back and found out she's been away 12 months. And the way she attempts to reassure Jackie when she's leaving is like, "It's a time machine! I could be away 10 seconds."

James Barbarossa

This was the whole thing... is that you aren't.

Maddy Searle

It isn't the most reliable at the moment.

Rachel Smith

That's not as convincing as you want it to be, when you just come back after 12 months.

James Barbarossa

It's true. It's true. It's mess- It's genuinely mess- It's messed up. Like the ending is nightmarish.

Maddy Searle

I was just thinking about the moment where Rose is trying to convince the Doctor to come for dinner and he's so opposed to the whole domestic thing. And then he basically like dirty talks to her in space. And she's like, "Yeah, okay. I'm coming back. I'm down now."

James Barbarossa

And she's like "Oh, I'm into it. I'm horny for space."

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That really is the gag though, isn't it?

Maddy Searle

Yeah, it really is!

James Barbarossa

And her mum's like, "Please don't go, please don't leave. I need you to not leave." And Rose is like, "But mum, don't you realise once you see something explode, you'll never go back to your house because there's explosions everywhere."

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That's fully what she says.

James Barbarossa

Not to completely boil this complex character arc down to that, but like a little bit. He can be like... She's like, "I really don't want to leave my family. My mom she can't cope," and the Doctor's like, "Yeah, but right now there's an explosion happening. And it's a million explosions all at once." She's like, "Fuck, I love explosions, you're right. Screw my mum, I don't care. I'm out. I don't care if Mickey gets sent to prison for my murder. I don't care." It does kind of feel like... I mean, "kind of feel like"... The Doctor knows what he's doing. The Doctor's not the best bloke in this. And I think... He knows.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

He knows. He knows and he says throughout like, he even says "I can't guarantee your daughter's safety." And he knows that he can't promise that Rose will be alive when they come back from this. But he can't help himself. The most decent thing he could do is just fuck off.

James Barbarossa

Or just like, cultivate a healthy balance. Just like realise that like, you can go off on the adventure, but just realise the importance of the human life as well. It's the key of this of like the balance of this arc. And it's the major reason why like, I think they do it really well. But it's also a major reason why I argued before that I think Mickey is a better partner than Rose is to Mickey, like Mickey is put through some rough stuff. In this episode. He like waits for her to come back. He's like, Jackie hates him. Everybody hates him. Not to put too fine a point on it. He's a black guy who's suspected by default of the murder of a young white woman basically just because he's around. And he still is like, "I want to be with you. I'm a human, can you not see the human life that's in front of you that like matters." But, you know, like Rose didn't even call him when she gets back. She doesn't even think about him for like a second.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, like when he walks into the room and she's just looks up at him is like, "Oh, yeah, you're here." And like, oh, my god. Again, this is... and in some ways I can understand why she hasn't really thought through those consequences.

James Barbarossa

'Cause it's only been a few days for her.

Rachel Smith

For her yeah, for her. It hasn't been that long. And it's quite hard to reconcile.

James Barbarossa

She's had a couple of hours And she's realised the gravity of what she's done. I've got a couple of quotes that I wrote down about this. Mickey says, "Now you're left behind with the rest of us Earthlings. Like how does it feel to be like left behind again? Don't you see what you've done to me?" essentially. But then like, she's like, "What is he, your boyfriend?" Like Jackie's like, "What is he your boyfriend?" And she's like, "He's not my boyfriend. He's better than that. He's much more important." Like, this is so obvious, her human life is getting, like stripped away from her.

Rachel Smith

And the fact that she says that, like in front of Mickey, of like, "Oh, you're...

James Barbarossa

Not important. Yeah.

Rachel Smith

"You're just the boyfriend. Who cares about you? Who cares about anything that you could offer me?" Like, ugh!

James Barbarossa

And she only- and that just shows you she only feels- she's only like... when she's looking at him and she feels- you can tell she's genuinely sorry. But I think she's probably only genuinely sorry because she feels guilty, not because she like actually cares about him. She just realises what she's done to him, essentially. And the doctor is really nasty to Mickey and he continues to be really nasty.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Unbelievably, unnecessarily nasty.

James Barbarossa

And I think it doesn't not work in this episode. And in Boom Town maybe, because at the end of this episode, it becomes like pretty obvious that he realises Mickey's value, he's like, "You're not actually an idiot. I'm sorry."

Maddy Searle

Yeah.

James Barbarossa

And he's then covering for the fact that Mickey, he wants respect from Rose, but he doesn't feel able to go on this trip. He's scared. And the Doctor's covering for him, and he covers for him for a while. But like, the 10th Doctor is still being like, pretty indiscriminately nasty to Mickey, for essentially no reason at that point. Like as soon as Mickey's like, "Yeah. All right. I'll come with you." Like later on. He still carries it on. And I think it's one of the ways where they just fall into the pattern, essentially, just the meme of like the Doctor being nasty. And it doesn't feel great, because a massive point of this Doctor, like he says he's sorry for like telling Charles Dickens to shut up. But he's just like, "You're a stupid ape. You're a monkey. I don't even care about you, Mickey, You're nothing to me. If I did, if I even explained

split two minutes of this, Ricky, you'd crumble to ash in front of my eyes." Like, it's like damn, man. And he's clearly jealous, and he makes up for it. But I don't know if it fully goes away.

Maddy Searle

I do find it interesting that the Ricky running joke goes fully into a parallel world where there is another version called Ricky

James Barbarossa

That's pretty good. That is pretty good.

Maddy Searle

I enjoy that aspect of it.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That is funny.

Maddy Searle

This is a slight veering of the topic, but still remaining within the episode. I enjoy hacker Mickey. And that kind of becomes a bit of a thread throughout the series. And I was kind of stuck thinking, "Why is this password buffalo over and over again? What is the point, why?"

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah, what is that?

Maddy Searle

And I realised it's a linguistics joke. My degree's useful!

Rachel Smith

Is this the buffalo buffalo buffalo thing?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Oh, tell us!

Maddy Searle

There is a grammatically correct sentence in English that is just the word buffalo repeated multiple times.

Rachel Smith

I hate it.

James Barbarossa

I like it.

Maddy Searle

It's the worst, and it's a staple of every first year semantics class.

Rachel Smith

I hate it so much, because I kind of understand it. But also it messes with my brain.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, it sucks. Yeah, just basically you can keep saying the word buffalo. And it's still a grammatical sentence, I think is the joke. But it's a terrible security system for UNIT to just have the same password for every single level of security.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Oh, it's hilarious.

Rachel Smith

Security in 2005 wasn't what it is now.

James Barbarossa

It wasn't good, yeah. I interpreted that joke as a different thing.

Maddy Searle

Oh, what did you think it was?

James Barbarossa

I thought it was to do with the Native American proverb that you use every part of the buffalo and therefore buffalo is used for every part of this security software. That was my interpretation. I wonder if they're both true.

Maddy Searle

Could be both.

James Barbarossa

I think yours makes way more sense than mine though.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, we've talked a little bit about Jackie already, but let's dive into her a bit more. I just want to bring up the absolutely iconic thing where the Doctor says, "I am a doctor," and she says "Well, prove it. Stitch this, mate," and then slaps him in the face.

Rachel Smith

Just punches him in the face!

James Barbarossa

Such a burn.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Some of the most iconic... Well just in the same world as the Doctor.

James Barbarossa

The memes in this episode.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Thing is, the exploration of what the Doctor and Rose's relationship is through Jackie is incredible. Like just her asking all these hard questions about what he is, who he is, what his intentions are. "What's so bad could have happened that you can't even tell me," and it's just it's just so fantastic how they use Jackie and her performance to really cut down to the horror of what it is to be an average person travelling with the Doctor. For sure.

James Barbarossa

Also the memes in this episode, so many. Harriet Jones is a meme gold mine in herself. Jackie is a meme gold mine in herself.

Rachel Smith

"MP for Flydale North."

Maddy Searle

The bit where Harriet... where Rose is discovered behind the curtain and Harriet absolutely screams at the top of her lungs, "Take me instead!"

James Barbarossa

As if the aliens would be like, "Yeah, okay."

Rachel Smith

"We'll only take one of you."

James Barbarossa

"There's four of us in here, but we'll go for you first." Yeah, I agree.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That spoke to the goodness of Harriet Jones. I think I like that moment because it felt honest. And it felt earnest. You know, like she genuinely felt what she was doing was an earnest attempt to save Rose's life. And it felt like she was willing to sacrifice herself for this person who she never met before. And I think that said volumes about who Harriet Jones was as a person.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, I think earnest is just a really good way to describe like the very core of her character.

James Barbarossa

"Excuse me, people are dead. This is no time for jokes." Yeah, like really genuinely like, "People are dead, I don't see what this is funny about this."

Rachel Smith

You kind of come out of this episode... I think this... She is like the blueprint for what an elected politician should be.

James Barbarossa

Yeah. She's on it.

Rachel Smith

She cares so deeply about the people that she represents, like, even to the point like... The very beginning of the episode when she's when she's first introduce, like, all this other stuff is going on. She's like, "No, but I still have my stuff about cottage hospitals. It's really important to the people that I represent, and that shouldn't get lost in what everything else that's going on." And when she runs out to the... Even right when she's running out to the press at the end, and she's just like, "Right, we have dealt with the situation." She's everything she does is, "I want to help. I want to be the most useful person that I can be in this situation and whatever skills I've got, I will give them up to help out with this."

Maddy Searle

Something that also struck me is she fully just sneaks into the Cabinet Room and reads some really secret files.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That is some dodgy shit.

Maddy Searle

Yeah that's like not sure I want that exactly in my politicians.

James Barbarossa

But she didn't do it deliberately. She was sneaking in there to put the document about like cottage hospitals being recognised by an NHS programme onto the docket. It's not like "I'm gonna go look at stuff."

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

And then she saw the secret plans...

James Barbarossa

Nuclear codes.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

And fully sat down and read them.

Rachel Smith

And it's a good job that she did.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Also, if a junior Minister found themselves in the Cabinet Office and then thought, "Let me just read all of our top secrets quickly," what would you think?

James Barbarossa

Hmm. Maybe.

Rachel Smith

I would be unsurprised.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Well, in this climate! With this government!

James Barbarossa

But she's not pulled in by the drama of the situation.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

No, it's true.

James Barbarossa

A lot of a lot of what happens in this is because people are pulled in by the drama of politics. It's all a big play, that everybody is like, "Ooh, I'm the coolest boy. And I'd better lock down the building because the politician told me to do it." And it's all sort of, but she isn't pulled in by that drama. She's just like, "This is all a bit silly, isn't it?" And when Rose is like, "Why don't we nuke them?" - she's just like, "You're a very violent young woman."

Maddy Searle

I love that line.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That's very good.

Maddy Searle

And let's have a bit of a closer look at the Doctor as well, because he kind of goes off on his own a bit towards the start of the two parter and just does a bit of investigating by himself, leaving Rose to deal with the aftermath of his bad piloting!

Rachel Smith

I appreciate the number of times people end up hiding and cupboards in this episode. And I particularly appreciate that he manages to appear in just the worst possible cupboard. He's like "I shall land my TARDIS somewhere very discreet." And open the door and there's just the army.

James Barbarossa

"Defence pattern delta," and they're like, "Yeah. Okay."

Rachel Smith

Yeah, just come out of the cupboard. "You can just tell us what to do now."

Maddy Searle

The Doctor's power of bullshit is very, very strong in this episode, and also the pretending that you can make the alcohol more flammable.

James Barbarossa

But like, I feel like the sonic probably could do that. No?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

The sonic could do that now.

James Barbarossa

Maybe. It's just rearranging, like, a molecular structure. He uses it to repair fences later in this season. Like he used it to, like conjure up metal, like to fix fences. I'm sure he could like rearrange the hydrocarbons or something but I don't know,

Maddy Searle

The sonic screwdriver is purposefully nebulous. So it can be whatever the writers need it to be any point.

James Barbarossa

Everything in this show is perfectly nebulous, so that the writers can make whatever they want, it's the whole thing.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Sonic paper...

James Barbarossa

TARDIS, everything.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I want more Sonic papers.

James Barbarossa

Psychic paper, I agree.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Psychic paper. Because I love when the Doctor just whips out a blank-ass sheet of paper and says, "I'm very important. Let me through."

James Barbarossa

"It's the thing! It's the 'Slikeen'!" And I've got that written down here. That was a great moment for me.

Rachel Smith

Yes! Jackie with the 'Slikeen'! I love her! "It's the thing! It's the 'Slikeen'!" The memes, the memes!

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

They are iconic.

James Barbarossa

"When they fart, if you'll pardon the word, it doesn't smell like a fart, if you'll pardon the word."

Maddy Searle

Oh god, yeah! I love that she repeats that.

Rachel Smith

So good.

Maddy Searle

And also with something that is objectively stupid, the pilot pig, they make it really poignant when it's running away scared, and the guy shoots it because he's scared. And then the Doctor sits with it while it's dying. I found that really moving.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

It was really moving.

James Barbarossa

And he's like angry that they've stripped away the like dignity of this animal to like dress it up.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Also, it's like that whole thing with the... and I think it's kind of a through line with the Doctor's... Basically anytime they want the Doctor to directly interface with a military personnel and it be ambiguous, he's always got this thing of like, "Well, what you go round shooting for?" You know, you know, there are other times where he doesn't give a single solitary fuck.

James Barbarossa

But I think this is the time that it makes the most sense.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

It makes sense here for sure. I mean, this is the clearest cut example of "Why did you shoot that for?" but also, he fully doesn't give a shit other times.

James Barbarossa

I kind of feel like any nation could stick a pig in a space suit and like chuck it in a weird plane at London. And if everybody's really immediately going to be like, "aliens," that's a little bit of a security flaw, isn't it? I mean, it is just a pig in a little spacesuit. Right. Like it's not. It's not got a robot arm or anything.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, I think the big selling point for it was the spaceship though. Like I think that was, that was definitely the more solid piece of evidence because that was very real, isn't it? Don't look so closely at the pig.

Maddy Searle

But... And the pig had an augmented brain with clearly alien segments as well.

James Barbarossa

Right, But nobody'd cut it open. The Doctor does that biopsy.

Maddy Searle

True.

James Barbarossa

To them, it's just a pig they find. Right? And that ship. Yeah. Okay. It seems like it's just a ship. But it was... the whole point was it was launched from within atmosphere. Like, you could just build a weird plane and just chuck it across the world. And they didn't realise.

Rachel Smith

Nobody take this as a suggestion.

James Barbarossa

Maybe this is... But like, that's sort of...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Guys, I have a great plan.

James Barbarossa

But that's sort of the point of the whole thing. Everybody gets high on the drama.

Maddy Searle

And then the whole thing about enemies that don't exist when the enemies are calling from inside the house, I found very, very relevant to the current political climate.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, I think that was one of the things I find really interesting about these two episodes is that looking back on it and looking back on what was happening, as they were being broadcast, it's so politically

relevant to the stuff that was going on at the time, but still really politically relevant now. And like one of the things- I know that at the end of the... towards the end of the second episode, they discovered that the Prime Minister has been murdered and shoved in a cupboard, another cupboard, different, different one.

Maddy Searle

Return of the killer cupboard.

Rachel Smith

So many cupboards that people just end up in. But just the fact that like, the very beginning of- towards the beginning of these episodes, you've got a major crisis is happening and the Prime Minister is absent. And I'm like, hmm? Hmm? When else has that happened recently? I wonder. It wasn't that our current Prime Minister missed the Cobra meetings at the beginning of the pandemic and doesn't seem to deal with crises very well, like... Yeah, I wish it was less politically relevant.

James Barbarossa

But it's also extremely poignant for everything that was going on at the time, like the Slitheen really do sort of represent the military industrial complex. Essentially, their entire plan is just like, "It doesn't really matter what we do. Let's just show up, freak everybody out as much as possible, until we can nuke something, and then we'll sell everything that we burn."

Rachel Smith

Because once again, the true enemy is capitalism.

Maddy Searle

Yes.

James Barbarossa

Oh, yeah. This is the logical endpoint of capitalism. The whole point is that there's a, there's apparently a galactic recession going on, they're willing to, like set fire to whole planets to sell off as petrol.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Basically.

James Barbarossa

When you, you know, we can make as much jabs about, "Oh, you're gonna die by global warming," but like, this is pretty poignant to that. Yeah.

Rachel Smith

And there's the whole bit about... "There is weapons of mass destruction, we have incontrovertible proof," and it's just, oh, I remember other people saying that around the same time, and it being used to justify war.

James Barbarossa

Yeah, yeah, exact same time. Yeah, it's manufactured consent, they really do just like, like... Jackie is so confused and frightened by it she turns in, like, essentially her own daughter to the government. And then it is like, upset when she realises she's turned her daughter into the government. It's hugely about the Iraq invasion. And I thought that was really interesting, because I didn't get that at all, when I watched it, because I was eight, or whatever.

Rachel Smith

I was fourteen. And I was aware, but... I was aware of it happening. But I didn't necessarily draw the direct parallels at the time.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah.

James Barbarossa

I think experts versus corrupt politicians was an interesting theme.

Maddy Searle

Yes. Get all the experts...

James Barbarossa

The experts are like, show up to try and explain things. But then like, obviously, the first thing the aliens do is like kill off all the experts, because then they can do as much political drama as they want. They can just have politicians going around going, "it's weapons of mass destruction", and nobody who actually knows anything is going to be there to go, "This doesn't make any sense." Yeah,

Maddy Searle

Yeah, because this predates the whole "war on experts" thing that happened which is very prescient.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

This whole first season does feel incredibly prescient. Like from top to bottom, like, there's not been an episode yet where I'm like, "ooh, that feels really relevant to today", even like, last week, which was, you know, bunch of bloody ghosts going into your nan. It's that whole idea of like...

James Barbarossa

Ghosts gonna nick your nan.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Just nick the nan. But it's that whole idea there with last episode of a different morality of, you know, helping people out, you know, how much we're willing to disrupt our comfort to help and save people's lives. You know, it feels like all of these things are incredibly relevant to today, especially more so in the last couple of years, because of that thing we're not going to talk about that we all know.

James Barbarossa

Current events.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Current Events.

James Barbarossa

David, David 19.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Precisely, yeah. David Pellow took over the world.

James Barbarossa

He would, wouldn't he?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

He would! But no, but it's incredibly relevant to today in maybe one of the... even more so than it was then I think, and I it feels like, the writers as well, you know, I'm sure, you know, I don't want to ascribe all of the credit just to Russell, because there is a team of people who make this show what it is.

James Barbarossa

Is this one even written by Russell?

Maddy Searle

This one was written by Russell T. Davies, this pair of episodes.

James Barbarossa

Cool.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah. So obviously, he was a huge driving force. And the reason that show is the shape it is, but you know, it does feel like they tapped into a lot of festering issues that were developing in our culture that I think have really only come to the fore over the last couple of years through the Trump era, through the pandemic, through all these different things. And it does feel eerie watching this first season back, knowing that it was released nearly two decades ago, at this point. Nearly two decades.

Maddy Searle

On a slightly different tack, I just want to shout out the little Welsh references that RTD manages to slip in every so often. First of all, you've got Lloyd George used to drink the Doctor under the table, which is amusing. And then you've got two Welsh actors in there, one of whom plays the police officer who goes after Jackie and one of whom plays the kind of lead of the of the taskforce and weirdly enough, the guy who plays the policeman who goes after Jackie, Steve Speirs, I know him from "Stella", but he also played a Gungan warrior in The Phantom Menace.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

No way.

James Barbarossa

Wait, was he Captain Tapals?

Maddy Searle

Yeah, he was Captain Tarpals.

James Barbarossa

Yes! I love Captain Tarpals!

Maddy Searle

I'm so glad that you know who this is, because I didn't know who that was.

James Barbarossa

I didn't realise that.

Maddy Searle

I looked him up because I really like him as an actor.

James Barbarossa

Best actor.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

"You-sa in big doo doo this time."

James Barbarossa

The Gungans are the bomb.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Jar Jar, jump!

James Barbarossa

And I want to see a really I want to see a really scary hyper realistic Gungan in the Mandalorian. Anyway.

Maddy Searle

Anyway. Speaking of strange creatures from beyond our realm...

James Barbarossa

Why haven't the Slitheen come back?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I think because they look the way they do. The Slitheen are super specific.

James Barbarossa

You could do a modern version on them.

Maddy Searle

How do we feel about the whole human representation farting thing and the using the fat actors and all this kind of stuff? How do we feel about that? Because it makes me a little uncomfortable.

James Barbarossa

I get that.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

What are we uncomfortable with, the farting?

Maddy Searle

Using fat actors for the particular purpose.

Rachel Smith

Yeah, all of the Slitheen are fat people.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Oh that's true, played relatively large people. Yeah, that's interesting.

Rachel Smith

It does... I mean, I think there are some aspects of it that do read as maybe a little unintentionally fatphobic like in 2021. I don't just brush past it in the same way that I think I would have done at the time. Like, I feel a bit more aware of aware of the fact that that's happening.

James Barbarossa

Yeah.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, it's definitely not egregious. But it just feels like if this episode were made today, that wouldn't be the best way to go about it.

Rachel Smith

Yeah.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

No, you think, yeah. Well, if it was made today, they're just cast a bunch of skinny people.

Maddy Searle

I do appreciate getting a lot of fat actors who were really talented into this episode. That part I do enjoy.

Rachel Smith

I wish that some of them maybe could have remained not Slitheen.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, exactly.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah, no, it's totally true. It does feel like... now that I think about it. Yeah, that definitely does feel... It's definitely pointed. And it's definitely called out.

James Barbarossa

The point was that they picked large people because it took less energy for them to compress down into them.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah, I mean, it's justified. But then, but I mean, he could they could just as easily say they fit into a skinny person with the collar. Do you know what I mean? I don't I don't think the Sci Fi explanation is justification for the real world representation and how it was portrayed.

James Barbarossa

Yeah, no, I agree. I agree. I agree. But let's remember, Russell T. Davies is a larger guy himself. And in that same way, he's gay but Rose says "you're so gay" to the doctor in this episode. And Russell T Davies basically said like, "That's how people talk, man, like, I'm gay. That's how people talk."

Rachel Smith

This is partly why I'm sort of saying like, I think it's very unintentional. Like I don't think that that's what I don't think that was the underlying motive for doing that. But yeah, and I agree that there are explanations in the character design for the Slitheen that explain why it has been done that way. But it's still has sort of certain levels of connotation there's like I don't know how comfortable I feel with that.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

But then if we think about television of the time it fits alongside it neatly so it's a byproduct of what was considered acceptable at the time because we hadn't considered our biases.

Maddy Searle

One aspect of this lady and I do appreciate is their glee everything they just like being evil is so fun and like, "ooh, the phone's red," and all this kind of stuff.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

It does reach a level of hokey for me, like by the end.

Maddy Searle

A little bit.

James Barbarossa

Blon hanging up everybody's like skin suits on hangers like...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That's so funny.

James Barbarossa

...like she's the coat person at a party. She's the coat rack at the house party that they're all having and she's like "Yes, no, come on through. Oh, I'll take your skin, okay."

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah!

Rachel Smith

Also the line: "Victory should be naked!"

James Barbarossa

"Your body is beautiful!"

Maddy Searle

Yeah. The naked thing I do enjoy. "Rejoice in it!"

Rachel Smith

That is such a choice.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I do think that I reached the stage with it that I was kind of done with it. Yeah, I think it did outlast its welcome a little bit.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, absolutely. Two episodes was too long for farting aliens who love being naked. But a little bit goes a long way.

James Barbarossa

That one Slitheen banged that guy's wife, mistress and farmer? But like...

Maddy Searle

Yeah, farmer! I noticed that as well. Gender ambiguous term. Is this a bisexual guy?

James Barbarossa

But why are the other Slitheen, like, into humans though? Can they... do they find that hot? They don't seem to like the human body in any other aspect.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

My dude, I really need you to ask yourself a real question on whether or not you think the Slitheen, on their actions and how they behave this episode, are not the kinkiest motherfuckers in the galaxy.

James Barbarossa

They are but they seem be...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

"Victory should be naked!"

James Barbarossa

They seem to not be into the human bodies that they're in. Right? Like they don't like humans at all.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I reckon they don't like being in them but I reckon they could get down and dirty.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, it's probably just uncomfortable because they're compressed.

James Barbarossa

I don't like being in them but they like being "in them".

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Oh yeah.

Rachel Smith

Yeah.

Maddy Searle

Oh god! Oh my god!

Rachel Smith

I mean, this circles back to the...

James Barbarossa

Blame me, I didn't make it up that he had three affairs.

Rachel Smith

This circles back to the evergreen question of why does the tree have tits? Why?

James Barbarossa

Why? Why does the tree have tits?

Maddy Searle

Why do Slitheen bang humans? Why do tree have tits?

Rachel Smith

It's the same pile.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

That is the same pile.

James Barbarossa

This series is so horny.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

If we're... if there's one thing that is a constant through line of Russell T Davies' time on Doctor Who it is: Why so horny?

Rachel Smith

Yeah, yeah.

Maddy Searle

And then you watch Cucumber and it all makes sense.

James Barbarossa

But like, this series in particular is pretty hot under the collar.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Really horny!

Maddy Searle

I think before... I think it's because it was before it really was established and you could kind of make it so that it's more of a kind of a show for adults that kids can also watch rather than being like a family Tea Time staple. It feels like it's more of kind of... it's got less oversight, it's got more room to spread its wings.

Rachel Smith

And you've... I mean, you've also got circling back to what we were talking about earlier of like the Doctor and Rose, and Jackie constantly asking them questions about their relationship, the chemistry between them, whilst the whilst they are very clear in that they are not a romantic pairing, they have not entered into that aspect of a relationship, they have an undeniable chemistry. Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper have this amazing chemistry together when they're on screen. And that's, that sort of feeds into the rest of it.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

And she contradicts herself by saying, "Oh, that's quite an age gap," which is not something you're worried about with a friend. Like, I'm not worried if my friend is, well, I mean, in this instance, 500 or more years older than me, but you know, it'd be a different story about a romantic companion so they she even contradicts herself when talking about the relationship between the Doctor and her.

James Barbarossa

Do you think they used...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

what are you gonna say?

James Barbarossa

Oh that's okay, never mind then.

Rachel Smith

Where is this going?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

You just had that tone of voice, you had that mischievous glee behind your tone. Because you knew what you were gonna say was good.

James Barbarossa

I was gonna say, do you think they use the BBC stock library a false or do you think they recreated it in the Foley studio? That was all I was gonna say, Zack! Could you get off my back?

Rachel Smith

Asking the real questions.

James Barbarossa

I'm a serious media critic, okay.

Maddy Searle

I mean, on QI or No Such Thing as a Fish or possibly both, they established that they have several different orgy sound effects in the BBC library.

James Barbarossa

Nice. Very, very cool.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Sorry? Of course they do.

Maddy Searle

And distressed chickens or some such. So would not put it past them to already have a diverse library of farts already, but I also wouldn't put it past them to get some bespoke farts in to just really make it pop.

James Barbarossa

I think the farting does do a really good job of foreshadowing the copper...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Maddy, wait. Sorry. No, no, no, James, I want to hear what you have to say. We cannot steamroll over Maddy just saying making it pop about farts.

Rachel Smith

Bespoke farts!

James Barbarossa

Please say it again. Please say it again. Clear so the microphone can hear you, Maddy.

Maddy Searle

I said what I said and I stand by it.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

So sorry, James. I just had to draw attention to it. Otherwise, I would have felt I let myself down. So sorry, continue.

James Barbarossa

I think it's a really cool way to foreshadow the copper being an alien. You know what I mean? That police officer being an alien is genuinely frightening. When he rocks up at the door, like a completely unedited shot of her like being normal, opening the door and him just like "Mrs. Tyler," and then her again closing the door and I'm like, "Oh, God, this guy freaks me out." And I forget about it every time and it gets me every time.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

It is so frightening having that encounter and the Doctor not being there. Because you know that like Jackie and Mickey cannot get through this alive on their own right now. You know, there is no way they escape this without some form of intervention from the Doctor and he is not here.

Rachel Smith

One of the things I do love about the moment where the police chief turns up, and he sends everybody else away. And then he takes off his hat and every other Slitheen has had like a really concealed zip, and it's just sticking out of his head, just not bothered to tuck it in. No effort has been made.

James Barbarossa

There are a lot of questions that I have about a lot of aspects of the Slitheen and that is a major part of one of them. Why? Why whenever they're unzipping their head, nobody does anything. They're unzipping their head and everybody just freezes. Everyone's like, "Oh my god," like the Doctor is frozen in horror when they're unzipping their head.

Rachel Smith

Like the humans, Jackie, totally could understand why she's just frozen in horror that makes perfect sense. But the Doctor?

James Barbarossa

You will never see another like trained military general in Doctor Who, when an alien thing is going on not immediately pull out a pistol and start like firing at them. But he's just like, "What is this? I don't, I don't understand." He's like "I think we have to put the country under martial law because aliens have very clearly kidnapped the prime minister, and then they start unzipping their heads and he's just like, "What is this that's happening now? I don't understand!"

Maddy Searle

I realise that that character's name is General Asquith, but forever he will be Mr. Hay in the 1995 Pride and Prejudice to me. That's just how it is.

Rachel Smith

Yes!

James Barbarossa

Very nice.

Maddy Searle

It's completely irrelevant to this conversation, but I had to put it out there.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

More than fair.

Rachel Smith

Agreed.

James Barbarossa

Why do they all have the voices of the people whose skin they wore?

Rachel Smith

That's all- that's part of the gas exchange.

James Barbarossa

I'm sorry. Why did their compression belts, if you electrocute one compression belt, they all get electrocuted?

Maddy Searle

Yeah, I made a note of that.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Across miles.

James Barbarossa

Across miles! Why would you design that this way?

Maddy Searle

Yeah, that makes no sense. It's a complete contrivance of the plot.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

See what I mean about this episode? Like, it's really good. These episodes are really good.

Rachel Smith

And then...

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

They don't fully come together as a complete work for me.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, because it's so dependent on the plot, whereas previous episodes were much more dependent on the character work. So you could kind of let the plot do itself in the background. Yeah. Whereas with this one, you're very much from the beginning, like, the Doctor is investigating the doctors going to down the street. You're in with the political machinations from the start. So you really have to know exactly how this gets resolved. You can't just hand wave it away.

James Barbarossa

But you could jabber out some technobabble and, and that would all make sense. You could be like, "Oh, well, because they're all compressing themselves down into human skin suits, those, those belts transmit mass between each other they share it amongst themselves and so when you put energy into it, it jabbars it across or whatever."

Maddy Searle

Yeah, it could be there was a line but it just got cut for a time.

James Barbarossa

Yeah, they're just not bothering with the explanation.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Guys. I just realised something. I just realised. I think it's Naoko Mori who plays...

James Barbarossa

Tosh. Yeah, Tosh.

Rachel Smith

Yes. Yeah, that was something I was gonna, I was gonna say. This is the second time...

James Barbarossa

This is the same character.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I just found out, she's also in Spice World.

Rachel Smith

Oh my god, she is! Yes!

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yes! Isn't that wild? She plays the pregnant friend of the Spice Girls.

James Barbarossa

So many stars discovered in this episode. Captain Tarpals, that one girl from Spice World.

Rachel Smith

Slash Torchwood.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Nicola. Her name is Nicola.

James Barbarossa

That guy from Pride and Prejudice or whatever. You know.

Rachel Smith

It's the absolute A list of British talent that's being put into these episodes.

James Barbarossa

This is the second Torchwood character in this series.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I mean, it's so clear now to me, that they're setting up a spin off.

James Barbarossa

Yeah.

Maddy Searle

I think it's time to start wrapping things up. So I just want to ask, thematically, do you think this pair of episodes was successful in what it set out to do? And I'll go to Zack.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Clumsy at times, this episode still manages to weave a compelling, thematic narrative that connects very presciently to current and, at the time, relevant topics. And I think it does achieve that successfully. I think everything that this episode set out to do it achieved.

Maddy Searle

Nice. And Rachel, what are you thinking?

Rachel Smith

Sort of like I said at the beginning, I found myself enjoying these episodes, more than I thought I would, based on my hazy recollection of their existence. I don't know how sold I am on all aspects of the Slitheen, particularly the extended farting gags. I just don't think that that quite hits for me in terms of my own sense of humour.

James Barbarossa

Yeah, for sure.

Rachel Smith

I know my eight year old nephew would love it. Height of sophisticated humour as far as he's concerned.

James Barbarossa

Definitely a product of the time of what was funny.

Rachel Smith

For sure. I just I have a much better or a much deeper understanding of a lot of the themes that it was trying to hit, and I think hit them really well, and particularly as an allegory for, again as Zack was saying, as an allegory for both the contemporary events of the time and stuff that's happening now, I think it does actually work surprisingly well. And just one last aside from the notes that I was flicking through that I made during the episode is, I'm slightly obsessed with the fact that they have Andrew Marr doing broadcasts from outside Downing Street, because he was the Downing Street correspondent at the time. Like that's just one of those little touches is really sets it in that world.

Maddy Searle

Yeah. And James, what are your thoughts on how it all comes together?

James Barbarossa

There's a lot of themes covered in this episode. And I do think for the most part, they will get pulled off pretty well. There's a few bits that don't, thematically that don't fully pull through. I think a lot of this is very critical of the sort of, it's very critical of the government. It's very critical of the way that we operate. But in the end she she's like "made in Britain", like it's all still a little bit like "Britain is good". And I think for the most part, it says Britain is bad. But that that was a bit muddled. I think the themes, I think the theme around the Doctor, and his relationship with the humans around him was really good, not to delve too deeply into a previous, you know, segment of the show. But I thought, the themes around the Doctor being like, he's a big brain, but it's all the people around him who feed him information to solve the problem. Everybody else collects data points for him. They are noticing things he's not noticing, because he's running around thinking about, you know, pig aliens or whatever. He makes fun of humans, of like standing around with their phones and taking photos of things. But Mickey takes a photo of the Slitheen and it's extremely relevant to the situation. So I think that theme that like the humanity of all the people around you can feed in to the like grand epic space boy moments, I think works really well particularly as a point of tension between Rose, her human life, the long arc of Rose's

human life versus her alien-y life. I think that thematically does a really, really good job too. Politically, character wise, I think they I think they pull it off fairly well.

Maddy Searle

Nice. Yeah, I've kind of got two sections of themes. In my notes, we've got the anti capitalism, the politics. And we've got a little hints of the class dynamic as well, because we've got the Powell Estate, which is very strongly contrasted with Downing Street and Rose is all very excited about being in the fancy car and going to go into Downing Street and all that kind of stuff. So you can feel a bit of a class divide there. And then with the more kind of emotional side of things, essentially, it's almost like a growing up story for Rose because she's gaining her independence from Jackie, she's finding her own feet and you there is a point in every parent's life where you have to realise you can't keep your child safe anymore, and you have to let them go off and do their own thing. And this is like that dialled up to 1000 because she's going off to be shot by aliens.

James Barbarossa

"Is my daughter safe?" yeah

Maddy Searle

Yeah. And I found the complicated feelings between Jackie and the Doctor both wanting to keep row safe, but also the Doctor kind of selfishly wanting to keep her to himself and Rose wanting for herself something more than what she sees as humdrum human life. So I felt that was very interesting and enjoyable. I think that was my favourite aspect of the episode that kind of emotional through line. So it comes to the time in the podcast where we give this pair of episodes a rating, and the rating system we're using this time is how many Slikeen out of five would you give this episode

James Barbarossa

"It's a Slikeen! He's a thing, he's a Slikeen!" Gold.

Rachel Smith

Oh, Jackie, I love you.

James Barbarossa

The memes are gold.

Maddy Searle

The memes. Rachel, how many Slikeen will you give this episode?

Rachel Smith

I think so far, it's probably been my least favourite of the ones that I've rewatched. So I probably get a go for 3.5 Slikeens out of five. That's where it sits for me.

Maddy Searle

Nice. I'm just imagining three Slikeens fully nude and then once Slikeen half in half out of their skin suit!

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

And one of them is just going, "Victory should be naked!"

James Barbarossa

Three Slikeens sticking out and then one Slikeen half sticking out doing the same animation as the other three Slikeens.

Maddy Searle

The very economical use of CGI. And James, what's your rating?

James Barbarossa

I mean, I'm gonna give it a four, man I'm gonna give it a nice four. Four fully emerged Slikeens, naked as all things should be. For their bodies are beautiful.

Rachel Smith

For their moment of victory.

James Barbarossa

For their moment of victory.

Maddy Searle

Excellent and Zack, how about you?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

I think that this episode sets out to do... it sets its eyes on a really big concept. It's a two-parter. They've got a lot of stuff to get through. And I think that while it achieves what it sets out to some of the execution definitely could have been better on this one. That being said, what it gets right, it gets really right. So it's got a solid foundation and I think a solid rating is three Slikeens out of five. 60%. Maybe I'm being overly harsh. Maybe I'll come to regret that rating because I do think this is a good episode. I don't mean to say that it's bad by any means. A Slikeen is not a p-p-p-pizza. Let's just put it that way.

Maddy Searle

The rating system changes each episode we can use different criteria. This is all about an emotional reaction on our part. It is it is not a definitive rating by any means.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

No. So that is three naked, horny Slikeens.

Maddy Searle

I'm trying to consider how many Slikeens I will award this episode. I think I'm gonna do a halfway house between Rachel and Zack and do 3.25 Slikeens.

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Oh, is that just because you felt like you had to differentiate yourself?

Maddy Searle

Yeah, yeah, I have to feel special.

James Barbarossa

It's just at the point when that with gummy bear head go "bloop" out of the top of the zip.

Maddy Searle

Their strangely cute eyes and the very not cute rest of their head. Thank you so much for listening to this episode of The Empty Children podcast with me, Maddy Searle, and my co-hosts Zachary Fortais-Gomm James Barbarossa and Rachel Smith. I would like to ask my co-hosts if you have anything to plug and where we can find you. Starting with James.

James Barbarossa

You can find me on Twitter at @barbarossaphone though you probably shouldn't. And on this episode, I just, I'd like to plug just like more pickled foods, you know, it can save your life from an alien and also, you know, nice bit of vinegar on some stuff. It's, you know, it's sour. It may be a British staple of cuisine but like appreciate a little bit more. You know what I mean? Desperately trying to find little things to appreciate for these plugs is getting harder and harder every episode but I'm, I'm gonna I'm gonna let myself in the eyes and stand by it.

Maddy Searle

Yeah, I mean, pre refrigeration pickling was a very important method of food preservation. I'm with you. And Zack, how about you?

Zachary Fortais-Gomm

Yeah, so you can follow me personally over on Twitter and Instagram at @zackfg, that's Z A C K F G. Of course, you can listen to both myself and James's shows The Orphans and Realms of Peril and Glory. The orphans is a thrill ride of science fiction series and Realms of Peril and Glory is a really soul destroying actual play podcast. If you're me who's editing the finale. Or a really fun one that will pull on your heartstrings and you will actually genuinely love, and I genuinely love and hope you check out. James is in it. Maddy is in it. Rachel will be in it at some point as well as fellow co-hosts David Pellow, David Devereux, and other people who eventually show up on the show will probably be on it as well. So thank you and goodbye.

Maddy Searle

Excellent. And Rachel, where can we find you?

Rachel Smith

Yeah, you can find me on Twitter at @smithy_smith. Or on Instagram at @smithy_smithism. You can follow me for my various tangents that I post on Twitter and pictures of my cat.

Maddy Searle

Fantastic and you can find me on Twitter at @maddy_abstract. And you can find this podcast on Twitter at @EmptyChildPod. This podcast is a Snazzy Tapir Production and you can find out more at @SnazzyTapir on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook and on our website snazzytapir.wordpress.com and we hope to see you next time when we'll be talking about series one episode six, Dalek. Goodbye.

All

Goodbye!

Maddy Searle

Exterminate!

The Empty Children was produced by me Maddy Searle for Snazzy Tapir Productions with art by Beth Crane and music by James Barbarossa.