Richard Scully, "Entry on: Doctor Who (Series, Season 4): The Underwater Menace by Gerry Davis, Geoffrey Orme, Julia Smith", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/93. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Gerry Davis , Geoffrey Orme , Julia Smith

Doctor Who (Series, Season 4): The Underwater Menace

United Kingdom (1967)

TAGS: Atlantis





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Doctor Who (Series, Season 4): The Underwater Menace
Studio/Production Company	British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1967
First Edition Details	*Dr Who: The Underwater Menace* (Serial GG, Doctor Who Series 4): Episode 1 (5:50pm, January 14, 1967); Episode 2 (5:50pm, January 21, 1967); Episode 3 (5.50pm, January 28, 1967); Episode 4 (5.50pm, February 4, 1967)
Running time	96 min 47 sec (4 episodes – 24:18, 25:00, 24:09, 23:20)
Date of the First DVD or VHS	1998 (VHS; release Episode Three only, no longer available); 2004 (DVD release Episode Three and brief clips only on Doctor Who – Lost in Time); October 26, 2015 (DVD release Episodes Two and Three, with restored audio and stills from 1 & 2)
Genre	Science fiction, Television series, Time-Slip Fantasy*
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Richard Scully, University of New England, rscully@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Gerry Davis

Script Editor



Geoffrey Orme , 1904 - 1978

Geoffrey Orme (1904-1978) was an English screenwriter for television as well as film. His earliest credits were feature film scripts of the 1930s and '40s – including *Sunshine Ahead* (1936); *Hearts of Humanity* (1936); four *Old Mother Riley* films (1941-3); and *Here Comes the Sun* (1946) – before turning to the new medium of television in the 1950s. Work on six episodes of the ITV (Independent Television) adventure/drama series *Ivanhoe* (1958) gave him an entry into writing for family entertainment; and he wrote episodes for other ITV series – *Interpol Calling* (1959); *The Avengers* (1963); and *No Hiding Place* (1965) – before being commissioned to write a four-episode storyline for the BBC's *Doctor Who*. *The Underwater Menace* (1967) turned out to be his last major work, and after the feature film *The Long Duel* (1967), Orme retired; dying in 1978.

Bio prepared by Richard Scully, University of New England, rscully@une.edu.au

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.



Julia Smith (Director)

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Casting	Patrick Troughton – The Doctor, Anneke Wills – Polly, Michael Craze – Ben Jackson, Frazer Hines – Jamie McCrimmon, Joseph Furst – Zaroff, Colin Jeavons – Damon, Tom Watson – Ramo, Peter Stephens – Lolem, Gerald Taylor – Damon's Assistant, Catherine Howe – Ara.
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Robinson, Nigel, *Doctor Who – The Underwater Menace*, London: Target, 1988.
Summary	'The Underwater Menace' was typical of mid-1960s *Doctor Who* (1963–1989; 2005–present) and its turn away from the strictly historical, and educational, storylines of the early '60s, towards purely science-fiction and adventure stories. The story sees the crew of the TARDIS (the time/space machine) materialise on an island inhabited by the survivors of the lost city of Atlantis. The Doctor (an alien 'Time Lord' from the Planet Gallifrey) and his companions (Ben, Polly, and Jamie) are threatened immediately by High Priest Lolem, and are to be made human sacrifices to the god Amdo, but are saved just in time by renegade scientist, Professor Zaroff. Zaroff intends to raise Atlantis (actually by draining the seas), and enslaves Ben and Jamie, to assist in his plans; while Polly is to be surgically converted into a Fish Person. Through a series of misadventures (again avoiding sacrifice, murder, and the like), the Doctor and his companions foil the

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

	nefarious plans of Professor Zaroff, with the help of the Atlanteans and the Fish People. Atlantis is ultimately doomed, but the Doctor is confident that the survivors will go on to lead profitable lives elsewhere.
Analysis	'The Underwater Menace' is a key example of mid-1960s British television entertainment. Watched by between 7 and 8 million viewers during its four-week broadcast, the serial is a notable example of a science fiction appropriation of Classical myth, in imitation of the B-movies of the same period (e.g. 1963's *Jason and the Argonauts*). The time travelling theme of the program was a handy device for justifying the incursion into mythical Atlantean history; and the Doctor and his companions serve as useful avatars for the young audience-members as they are introduced to and familiarised with the pseudo-historical and mythical context of the storyline (or, rather, reacquainted with matters with which they were supposed to be familiar; with such themes still being central to British elementary-level schooling in the 1960s).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Atlantis
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Humour Intertextuality Travel
Further Reading	BBC Online, *Doctor Who – The Classic Series*: 'The Underwater Menace' [Archived website], at bbc.co.uk (accessed: August 17, 2018) [comprises analysis and details from: Paul Cornell, Martin Day & Keith Topping, *The Discontinuity Guide*, 1995; David J. Howe & Stephen James Walker, *Doctor Who: The Television Companion*, 2003].

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Harmes, Marcus K., *Doctor Who and the Art of Adaptation; Fifty Years of Storytelling*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, esp. pp. 68 ff.

Howe, David J., Mark Stammers and Stephen James Walker, *Doctor Who: The Handbook: The First Doctor*, London: Virgin Publishing, 1994.

Howe, David J., Mark Stammers and Stephen James Walker, *Doctor Who: The Sixties*, London: Virgin Publishing, 1992.

Keen, Anthony G., "It's about Tempus: Greece and Rome in “Classic” Doctor Who", in David C. Wright, Jr., and Allan W. Austin, eds., *Space and Time: Essays on Visions of History in Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010, 100–115.

Keen, Anthony G., "Sideways Pompeii! The Use of Historical Period to Question the Doctor's Role in History", in Ross P. Garner, Melissa Beattie, and Una McCormack, eds., *Impossible Worlds, Impossible Things: Cultural Perspectives on* Doctor Who, Torchwood, *and* The Sarah Jane Adventures, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010, 94–117.

Addenda

Soundtrack CD released (all episodes), February 2005.

Recorded viewers:

Episode 1: 8.3 million

Episode 2: 7.5 million

Episode 3: 7.1 million

Episode 4: 7.0 million

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.