



Doctor Who: Blue Box

Kate Orman

Download now

Read Online →

Doctor Who: Blue Box

Kate Orman

Doctor Who: Blue Box Kate Orman

The Nineteen-Eighties; as we enter the Age of the Personal Computer, the newborn 'Internet' spreads across America, and the computer invasion enters our homes. Across the technological frontier, an incredible war begins between the criminals and their savvy opponents. A brilliant young programmer, a beautiful college student, and a mysterious hacker known only as 'The Doctor' join forces to combat an electronic threat fallen into the hands of a notorious computer outlaw. Respected computer journalist Charles 'Chick' Peters was an eyewitness as these unlikely heroes fought their hi-tech skirmishes across the nation's vulnerable capital - and inside the world of the computer. Blue Box is the compelling true story of a secret computer project that could literally change the way you think.

Doctor Who: Blue Box Details

Date : Published October 28th 2003 by BBC Worldwide Publishing

ISBN : 9780563538592

Author : Kate Orman

Format : Paperback 269 pages

Genre : Media Tie In, Doctor Who, Fiction, Science Fiction

 [Download Doctor Who: Blue Box ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Doctor Who: Blue Box ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Doctor Who: Blue Box Kate Orman

From Reader Review Doctor Who: Blue Box for online ebook

Shelley says

I'm not sure I'll finish this one - it's very slow going. I never met Peri or the Sixth Doctor before, and I still don't feel like I have. So far, he's made a few phone calls, but otherwise has only been in one scene of the book - and it wasn't with Peri. The POV is an external character who doesn't know them either, and that's hard, too. The plot is interesting - computers and technology set in the 1980s - but I think I'll have to keep this one on the backburner until I see an adventure. Unless someone wants to tell me that this is a super book, if only I keep with it. *g*

Daniel Kukwa says

It moves along at a nice clip, especially in its second half. It also wallows in some convincing early 80s techno-nostalgia for those of us old enough to remember that seemingly-distant past. However, it's certainly not the best of Kate Orman's "Doctor Who" novel canon. She doesn't have the same love & affection for the 6th Doctor & Peri that she does for the 7th & 8th Doctor; her adoration in those efforts positively glows on each and every page. In all honesty, the novel never really rises above being a pleasant diversion...almost as if she was going through the motions on this occasion. "Vampire Science" and "Year of Intelligent Tigers" it certainly isn't.

Puddle Jumper says

the promise of 80s tech lured me to this book :)

It was the first one I read with the 6th Doctor and Peri and was great to read a full length adventure featuring them, the TV stories always seemed too short.

Michael Battaglia says

Oh, finally, an actual adult. Perhaps sensing that the Past Doctor line was suffering from an affliction that could be termed "a lack of quality", the BBC go and bring in one of their best and most reliable authors, Kate Orman. Typically, any cover sporting her name is more or less a guarantee that you're not only going to get a good novel but a well-thought out one as well, not just coasting on the good feelings we have for the show but with some of the elements that you can find in other, proper novels, things like characterization and dramatic tension and some nice emotional moments.

Unfortunately, I'm starting to suspect the whole line appears to be cursed because not even someone of Orman's powers can save it, turning out a story that is interesting without even being too exciting and not at all achieving the depths which normally seem to come so effortlessly with her.

Squabbling buddies the Sixth Doctor and Peri arrive in the eighties far before the dawn of the Internet, when

ARPAnet was just a way to link a bunch of computers together. The Doctor is on the track of some alien technology that got lost and may be able to wreck the planet in the wrong unknowing hands, discovering that all wires seem to lead to computer expert and expert hacker Sarah Swan, who is a bit aggressive and not all that inclined to listen to reason or be told that she's wrong. Meanwhile an Australian reporter is tagging along writing a story on the events that are happening, so that we're not really reading about what's happening but a book based on what's happening.

The whole "article" aspect of this is done so clumsily and inconsistently I have to wonder if the format was imposed on Orman by the BBC, since her heart barely seems to be into it, often discarding it for sections and writing the book in a normal style. This is maybe the third Who book recently that has taken on the aspect of a text, which makes me wonder if the BBC thought it worked wonders once and were determined to try it again and again. But as I said, its inconsistent here. Not only does the narrative have to jump through hoops to keep reporter Chick involved, but he narrates sections that he's not even in. This could lead to a disconnect between what happened and what Chick thinks happened but if Orman was going there, the book gives no sign of it. Which means that the novel basically reads like a regular novel.

This isn't bad in itself, as Orman does know how to write. But a good chunk of the action involves people sitting around on computers attempting to hack other computers. If you've ever seen "Hackers" you can assured that this is not the world's most exciting pastime and the only thing probably less exciting than watching it is reading about it. She does her best with it but when the novel consists of people standing around computers talking and occasionally moving to a different place and a different computer to continue the discussion, it's a high hurdle to overcome. Early scenes where the Doctor is praising the wonders of an early Apple computer and other dated bits of technology make you wonder at first if this whole story is going to be played for irony. For better or for worse, the answer is no.

Which is a shame, because her gift for characters is intact. Hacker Bob Salmon is nerdy without being a cliché and involving his dad in some moments presages how the TV show would go domestic in a few years (and everyone then would think how this is blazing new ground for the series). The reporter has a voice of sorts but can't overcome that he's basically "there" for a separate point of view. A late revelation of an aspect of his personal life is interesting but the novel seems to go out of its way not to make a big deal about it, which makes you wonder why it was even brought up in the first place if everyone is going to be so cool or nonchalant about it. Villain Sarah Swan stays just on the right side of "cackling bad guy", although the book's attempts to make us believe that everyone is afraid of her because she can (gasp!) reroute their telephone numbers doesn't exactly put her in the same class as, say, Mavic Chen. Meanwhile, Peri is useful even when she's out of her depth but just like almost every other novel with Peri it brings up the specter of "will she stay with the Doctor or leave" since they bicker all the time, a false dilemma that we know will end up with her staying.

And that may be the problem with the novel, and maybe with the line in general. The stakes never feel as high as they do in the Eighth Doctor novels, there's less a sense of urgency as much as everyone having a grand old time hanging out and fighting alien menaces. With less incentive to break new ground or innovate, Orman plays it safe and the novel winds up feeling rather toothless, a pale version of what we know she's capable of. Even when the alien artifact starts to get real dangerous, the story is practically over and everyone takes care of it fairly easily so the threat level never becomes more than tepid. Its a shame in a way because you feel the entire time like her usual sharpness has been dulled and its hard to tell if she's having an off day or its the nature of the line itself that trends even the best authors toward mediocre. On the one hand that may absolve the previous authors of the some of the blame but it still doesn't speak well for expectations.

F.R. says

Given the lack of female writers recently on the TV version of Doctor Who, I thought it would be interesting to try out some of the female writers of Doctor Who in other mediums.

And given that The Sixth Doctor's reign was one of the most troubled eras of the show, featuring The Doctor and his young female companion in an almost abusive relationship, with that companion – if we're honest – being little more than a leotard-clad scream-monkey there to be lusted after and pawed over by every sleaze-ball in the known galaxy, The Sixth Doctor and Peri seems the most interesting place to start.

Intriguingly one of the first things Orman does with her Sixth Doctor is change his outfit. (Terrence Dicks did exactly the same in his novel 'The Players'.) This of course rises a wry smile as there is no visual component to books. We can't actually see the outfit here, and yet that particular multi-coloured coat is deemed so offensive that even when we can't see it, authors would rather just lose it than their have their lead character parade around in such a garment. The comedy value is increased when it emerges that Peri is only dressing the way she does to emphasise to The Doctor how ridiculous he looks, only he's so full of himself he hasn't noticed yet.

Orman has clearly put a lot of thought into their relationship, wondering how these two individuals survive together while bickering constantly. Peri is back on Earth, at around about her own time period, and the temptation swiftly arises for her to leave The Doctor and the Tardis. But as the book goes on, it's suggested that Peri and The Doctor share some kind of survivor syndrome, all the awful things they've seen, all the hair-raising adventures they've had have welded them together. She feels bonded to him, because they've been through so much together, because he went through that regeneration for her. I'm not sure I completely buy those reasons, but at least reasons are offered – which is more than the TV show ever did. That bickering, uncomfortable relationship of theirs isn't as much on show here though, as they're never together just the two of them (and how nice it must be for Peri to share a hotel room with two men and have neither of them put the moves on her) that means the unpleasant banter don't unsettle the story; there isn't the sense that you're looking through the glass darkly at some terrible, abusive relationship.

Written in 2003, this is Doctor Who dropped into an early 1980s tech thriller – with hackers and tech language aplenty (I have no idea how accurate this tech language is, it might be frighteningly accurate or ludicrously bad, I just noted that there was a lot of it and went with it). It's an interesting contrast as this is set in very much the same time frame as this era of Doctor Who, but it's consciously so different to it. True, the BBC budget wouldn't have stretched to The Doctor, Peri and a couple of co-conspirators driving like the Scooby gang around Washington DC. But that's the reason we have the books, to do adventures the TV show hasn't the largesse to do. No, the biggest contrast is that this is determinedly un-gaudy. The Colin Baker version of the TV show is the most ludicrously gaudy version of Doctor Who there is: brightness and big gestures signifying nothing. Here though everything is muted, from The Doctor and Peri's outfits to everything around. This is Doctor Who in the aesthetic of Francis Ford Coppola's 'The Conversation': lots of grey, anonymous buildings and roadways. And it's incredible how well The Sixth Doctor fits in here, that Orman can take the biggest and brashest Doctor, put him in this more naturalistic setting and not lose anything in the process.

It's a race against time as The Doctor and friends try to stop female super hacker, Swan, from making use of an alien technology that may do huge damage to the planet. There's tension, shifting loyalties and paranoia throughout, and the whole is the kind of adventure you wish Colin Baker's Doctor had had in 1985.

Dave says

A transsexual narrator, a gratuitous slam against American law enforcement by having a highway cop come out of nowhere to try and rape Peri only to vanish in about 3-4 lines never to reappear, and a story that moves along at the 1200 baud rate of the early computer. I recommend giving this angry scribbler with an agenda a pass even if you're offered this piece of crap for free. I see her projecting herself into the character of Swann. She wants things her way and will ruin the lives of anyone who disagrees with her slightest whim through her use of the phone lines and budding internet to ruin their credit lines, expose their private lives to family and employers, and generally being an overall pos. She a regular poster child of the political left.

Makes me long for the days of Tom Baker as the reigning Doctor when he was willing to sort out the Master (pre-gender bending character assassination by Moffatt's crew of social re-constructionists) by shooting him with the D-Mat gun.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nwhyte.livejournal.com/1546301.html>

A decent enough novel taking the Sixth Doctor and Peri to the phone phreaking and computer hacking culture of mid-80s America, the story told in first person by a transsexual Australian journalist. Ages ago I read *Underground: Tales of hacking, madness and obsession on the electronic frontier* by Suzette Dreyfus which covers some of the same ground from an Australian perspective, which was really all I knew about it; Orman's novel seems a fair reflection of what happens when aliens appear and semi-accidentally start to hack the human race. (The 'Blue Box' of the title is a hacking tool, not the Tardis.) Interesting characterisation of Peri, less so of the Doctor.

Akiva says

One of the (one star) reviews on this book opens with "A transsexual narrator, ..."

Well then. As a 'gender bending, character assassinating' degenerate lefty, consider me *sold*.

Leela42 says

Past Doctor Adventure (PDA) with the sixth Doctor and Peri. Reads like a draft was published by mistake. A number of internal inconsistencies, narrative gaps, and a couple of badly-written chapters. If you just want to read a Doctor Who book, sure, go for it. But if you're not much into Doctor Who books, don't bother.

Scott says

Kate Orman was one of the top rank of Who novel writers during the long hiatus. Her books were experimental, original and, to be honest, better than most of the others. It's long baffled me why she didn't manage to parley her Who successes into a successful novel writing career outside Who, as fellow top-tier Who writers Paul Cornell and Ben Aaronovitch did.

This was her final Who book, released after I had kind of given up on the BBC Who books, so I was pleased to run across it in a shop recently and picked it up on impulse. It's an odd one, though.

Featuring the Sixth Doctor and Peri, it feels more like a Seventh Doctor book, in that the Doctor is absent for long stretches, off doing secret things in the shadows. The Doctor even ditches his trademark multicolour coat for a sober dark suit as if to signify that he's, y'know, a bit dark. Peri, meanwhile, has bugger all to do in the story and spends the whole book considering whether to stay with the Doctor or not. She's even more useless here than she was on telly, and that's saying something.

These are odd choices for this team, and make it feel like Orman's not happy writing for them - I wonder whether she was told to adapt a Seventh Doctor pitch for Sixie and reluctantly agreed.

The setting is a compelling one. It takes place in the 80s world of phone hacking, BBSs and pre-usenet communities, when playing with the telcos was cutting edge and the command line was king. Orman nails this convincingly and although the book consists mostly of people in rooms typing, it manages to be surprisingly involving. But the book never really kicks into high gear, despite a moderately exciting car chase finale. The threat is clever and well thought through, but lacks the immediacy of a big snarling monster about to eat our heroes.

Orman's other slightly odd choice is to frame the book as reportage by a transsexual journo who tells the story from his perspective. This being the case, the reveal of his gender towards the end never quite convinces - he spends a lot of the book trying to keep it secret, but his boss finds out so he, um, then writes about this in a book aimed at the public, thus outing himself to the world, something the character as portrayed would seem to find deeply undesirable. Orman's literary conceit trips over itself here.

In all, this is a very experimental Who book, full of clever stuff and well worth the time taken to read it, even if it doesn't come off in the same way that Year of Intelligent Tigers or Left-Handed Hummingbird did.

I think perhaps the book's faults signal that Orman had done all she could with Who and was long past ready to jump into a career writing self-created fiction. After reading Blue Box I'm more baffled than ever as to why she hasn't managed that jump.

Kristen says

Don't get me wrong, the book was good, but it just didn't have the 'Who' feeling, mostly probably because of the "why are you renting a camper and hiding in the forest and ignoring the fact that the TARDIS would be a much better place to hide away" moments.

Edward Butler says

What a wonderful surprise this book was. It's a genuine, grown-up novel in the *Doctor Who* universe. The portrayal of Peri's character, in particular, was extraordinarily sensitive. Best *Who* novel I've read, by a long way. Setting the novel back in the 1980's was an inspired choice as well. For one thing, it gives the author an opportunity for profound insights into the evolutionary arc of computer technology and the social transformations it would unleash; but it also acts as a subtle and rather sweet tribute to the era in which the Sixth Doctor debuted. Outstanding.
