

Dick Mills

Dick Mills took over from previous Doctor Who sound effects man Brian Hodgson in 1972 and created all the effects for the series from then onward. Like Brian, he worked at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

Set up in 1958, the Radiophonic Workshop created special sounds to heighten the impact of radio drama. The potential of these sounds was soon spotted by Spike Milligan, at that time writing and performing in the Goon Show. For example, the sound effect Major Bloodnok's Stomach was created at the Workshop, with input from Dick Mills.

Naturally the Television Service (as it was then known) wanted to use this Radio facility. Quatermass and the Pit was the first TV programme to use the Workshop and by the time Doctor Who started in 1963, Producer Verity Lambert was quick to realise that the Workshop was the ideal place to go to acquire that distinctive new 'sound feel' the show needed.

By 1972 Brian Hodgson, who created such memorable sounds as the TARDIS landing noise, wanted to move on to other work. Dick Mills, who had already worked on episodes of Who including Tomb of the Cybermen and The Power of the Daleks, was happy to take over. His first Doctor Who season kicked off in collaboration with composer Dudley Simpson. Dudley wrote the music, Dick did the special sounds.

In those days they worked from the script of the episode, visiting the studios at Television Centre to see just how big (or small) the monsters were so that the sound was just right.

They had to be very careful about sound continuity. If a particular monster had appeared in a previous series there would be letters of complaint if the sound effects had changed in the meanwhile. One wall of Dick's studio was entirely covered by reels of tape housing every sound used in every episode from day one.