



SCORCHING SANDS...

Since Daniel and Vala paid him an unexpected visit in season nine, the Doci has been mysteriously absent. Julian Sands tells us exactly what the Doci is up to in *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*...

What was your experience of the shoot?
 The people who made *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*, they're very professional; they're very committed to their show in a very personal way. They've been with it for such a long time that there is a level of vocational fulfillment on the part of the crew and the creative team working on the Stargate experience, so they made it personally as comfortable as it could be. I was always wearing these wretched contact lenses, these full white lenses which make things inherently uncomfortable, partly because I don't wear contact lenses and these prosthetic contacts are always quite thick, which means that you are robbed of most of your sight! So you can't see people, you can't share in the experience, and the eye contact, and the lovely work which has been done by the Art Department, you can't see the faces of the people that you're working with – you get quite a shadowal impression – wearing contact lenses is always something you should try and avoid! So, yes the crew and the circumstances were lovely. As an actor, you're given something like contact lenses to work with and they may be uncomfortable and you have to take that discomfort and channel it in some way, overcome it, it's just another obstacle to try and find the truth in the work you're doing.

It does seem a shame that you miss out on so much of the experience...

It's isolating, but through that isolation you focus on the work you're doing, you use it to make the Doci as iconic and interesting as you can, because you have a sense of being detached, in actually doing the work, that I think is refracted into the character you present. That's the hope anyway.

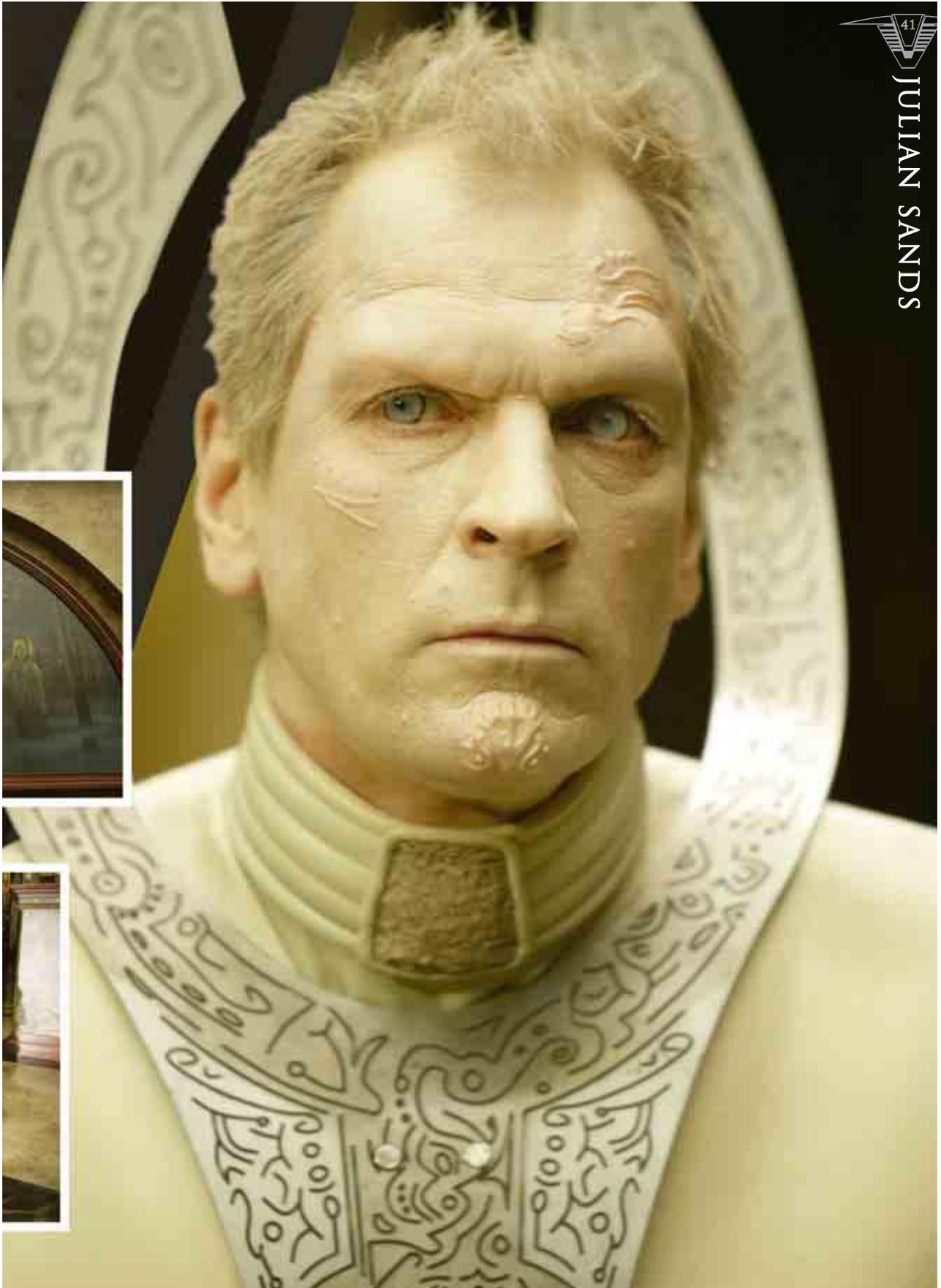
Along with the lenses, the Doci also wears an enormous neck-piece – it seemed like a very uncomfortable shoot for you!

Well, it was awkward – I don't want to overstate it and say it was uncomfortable, but it was awkward, and I had at one point suggested that we didn't use it! The costume designer was mortified! They thought it was such an important element in identifying the character as this great symbol, and they were right of course. So I was straight jacketed, because under my smock was this kind of harness thing which was holding that piece of garb in place. The center of gravity would not have held it in place without all the Mormonic strapping!





JULIAN SANDS





What can you tell us about the Doci's role in *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*?

Well, I don't want to give anything away, but when I did the episode a couple of years ago there was a great response and interest in the character and there was a feeling that he could return by popular request as you've never seen him before! But, it's a strong character and there was the potential to make more of him if the writing supported it, and if my availability allowed for it, so the movie allowed for some degree of resolution, I think for a lot of the characters that have appeared in *Stargate's* evolution. I think there was great pathos in the return of the Doci, for me personally, it's a bit like playing the Pope or something – John Paul the Second in his last days. I wouldn't do any work, but I especially wouldn't do anything in the sci fi genre if I felt there wasn't an emotional depth to the experience, something to give it complexity, or density. Otherwise you're just a sort of Cyberman, or a Dalek! And I think that the moments of interaction, as you will see between the Doci and the other characters was quite meaningful in an emotional way, with the almost biblical

destruction of the temple. There is a WB Yeats poem with the line 'The center will not hold' and there was definitely a feeling of the end of someone's world and with that there is a kind of sadness and, if you're wearing a harness and you have your contacts, and it's very late and you're tired – you feel that sadness.

Writer/director Rob Cooper likens the Ark to modern day TV – would you agree with that comparison?

That's interesting. I would hope that people are more intelligent and more savvy than that, one hopes that people are. It's so interesting, for instance in Venezuela the referendum that Chavez was looking for to endorse his monopoly of power, he didn't get. What's even more interesting is that he allowed that vote to stand, there was no manipulation of it, no intervention as there might have been elsewhere, and for that I respect Hugo Chavez and his set up, for so far, not behaving like Robert Mugabe.

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JULIAN SANDS

My point is you can fool some of the people all of the time, all of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time. I think the Ark has really such an omniscient power, that although I understand what Rob means by suggesting it's sort of like a great beacon, broadcasting on the airwaves all kinds of propaganda, a kind of Pravda Tower, I'm not sure that the simile holds up – I think it makes it too cerebral, it's too much about information being absorbed by the brain. I think the Ark operates on a far more holistic level, I mean it's going after people's souls, not people's brains. I would liken it, if I was trying to liken it to something with which we are familiar, more to an instant transmitter of some sort of psychotherapeutic, pharmacological treatment.

Like a drug?

No, because that would limit it to physiology, and I think it has a spiritual power. So it's more than a drug, and it's more than propaganda, it's something more omniscient. I can't define it exactly; it isn't like anything I'm familiar with in our moribund world! Which is why it's on *Stargate*, and not in Trafalgar Square!

All in all, would you say that you enjoyed your *Stargate* experience?

Oh yes, for sure – I wouldn't have gone back if I hadn't! If they talked about another movie where there was a way of re-exploring the character, definitely I'd be up for it. I think that show wouldn't have endured unless there was a seriousness about it, a depth, an emotional content which was quite profound otherwise we wouldn't be talking about it, there wouldn't be the level of interest, there wouldn't be the demand. I would like to think that the Doci might be revisited, maybe even in an age where prosthetic lenses are more comfortable! If the fans can generate the demand for a further exploration of the character, as a further consideration of those experiences then why not, because I don't think the writers, when dealing with material like this can ever completely exhaust what is there. There is a universe to be written about and it's a universe of universal themes. I think there's something perennial about the arenas that the whole *Stargate* series explored. They're timeless and enduring. ^

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