



Columns

In Memoriam: David Warner

By [Ryan Fitzmartin](#) | December 29th, 2022

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There are no small parts for some actors. There are those of such strong talent that adding them into a movie in any way increases its quality tenfold. David Warner was one of those actors. We lost this Emmy-winning, BAFTA-nominated titan this year at the age of 80. Warner was a prolific, highly visible actor with literally hundreds of screen and voice credits to his name. He played a vast variety of genre roles. He portrayed everything from Klingons and supervillains to vampire hunters and serial killers, but he also took prestigious roles in projects like *Titanic* and the Meryl Streep miniseries *Holocaust*. Still, the loss of Warner will be felt most keenly in the genre world, where he was truly one of the greats.



Warner and Mary Steenburgen in *Time After Time* (1979)

Born in Manchester during the Second World War, Warner was raised by his Russian Jewish father and stepmother. Classically trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Warner performed minor parts in various Shakespeare plays, before transitioning to movies with a role in the Best Picture Oscar winner *Tom Jones*. It was in the 1970s that he really broke out as a genre actor, appearing in over a dozen films, including movies by luminary genre directors such as Sam Peckinpah, Richard Donner, and Nicholas Meyer. My personal favorite of this time is his role as a time-traveling Jack the Ripper in Meyer's *Time After Time* – Warner took a wild concept and grounded it, playing an urbane, intelligent, and very terrifying Ripper.

To film and TV fans though, it is probably the 1990s which cemented Warner the most in the popular imagination. In 1991, he reunited with Nicholas Meyer in the role of a Klingon leader in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. As Chancellor Gorkon, he brought his trademark strength and weight to a key role. The same year, he appeared in cult TV projects *Cast a Deadly Spell* and *Twin Peaks*. A year later, he debuted in a role that would cement him in the hearts of comic fans, Ra's al Ghul, in *Batman: The Animated Series*. Warner played the supervillain as clever, aristocratic, and ultimately deeply sinister. He held his ground when going toe to toe with the great Kevin Conroy, who also passed away this year. Warner capped his golden decade off as Spicer Lovejoy, the snarling and villainous valet in James Cameron's *Titanic*.



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The last time I wrote one of these, we were still in the midst of the Covid-19 lockdown, backsliding from a "re-opening" and loosening of restrictions that never should have happened, with vaccines and their promises just over the horizon but not quite here yet. I was feeling the effects of a world rocked to [...]

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David Warner's Ra's al Ghul

Warner would continue to have a strong career, appearing mainly in television over the next few decades in quality projects like *Doctor Who*, *Penny Dreadful*, and *Wallander*. He would even reprise Ra's al Ghul in *Batman Beyond*. His final film role was *Mary Poppins Returns*, and his last on TV was a return to the DC Universe (and *Freakazoid!*) in *Teen Titans Go!* Over the years, Warner took every role with sincerity and dedication. He gave A-grade performances, never treating his genre projects as B-movies. The world of genre film and television will not be the same without him.

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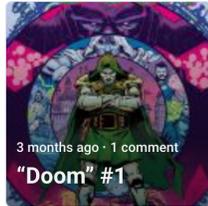
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