

[Skip to main content](#)[Skip to navigation](#)[Skip to navigation](#)

[Theatre blog](#)[Stage](#)

🕒 This article is more than 17 years old

George Sewell, RIP: don't mention UFO

This article is more than 17 years old

George Sewell has died at the age of 82. Let's remember him for his work in theatre and film rather than a one-off sci-fi stint.

[Xan Brooks](#)

Wed 11 Apr 2007 13.02 BST

[Share](#)



0

0

About 18 months ago I caught the train to Solihull to cover the "[12th annual Cult TV festival](#)", which took place in a small hotel beside a roundabout. The bar was crowded with middle-aged men in Klingon costumes and the celebrity guests included the B-movie actor John Saxon and Kim Darby, who had once been in Star Trek.

There was a TV trivia quiz hosted by Peter Tork, formerly of The Monkees. Reading gamely from his cue card, Tork asked the audience "which quiz show famously came to us 'live from Nor-witch'?" and they in turn hooted and jeered his pronunciation.

The Guardian photographer was not impressed. "This is really bad, isn't it?" he said loudly (too loudly, I thought). "I covered a Lord of the Rings convention once and it was nothing like this. At least those people were literate."

By far the sanest, most entertaining person I met that day was the actor George Sewell. On stage, Sewell had starred in a brace of classic working-class plays: [Fings Ain't Wot They Used T](#)Be and Sparrers Can't Sing. On the big screen he had appeared in Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life*, Mike Hodges's [Get Carter](#) and Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*. On the small screen he had acted in several of Ken Loach's BBC dramas from the 1960s.

This was a fine list of credits; something any actor should feel good about. And yet Sewell's place at the Cult TV festival was solely down to his brief stint as Colonel Alec Freeman in the sci-fi series *UFO*, which ran from 1971 to 1972.

I sat with Sewell for almost an hour, eating lunch, drinking beer and watching the Klingons prop up the bar. He explained that he attended a couple of these things each year, signing autographs at a tenner a time. It got him out of the house, he said, and provided pin money for his retirement. But he admitted that he had never fathomed the mindset of the fans, and he lamented the fact that it was *UFO* that was being celebrated and never the work that he was properly proud of.

"I don't know why there's not a festival for that kind of thing," he said. "Maybe it's because Ken Loach is about the real world and *UFO* is not, so it attracts people who are escaping their ordinary lives."

I thought about this on the way to work this morning when I opened the paper to see that [George Sewell](#) had died. I recalled his unflappable good humour that day; his breezy, pragmatic air. He reminded me of my granddad, or my great uncles - solid, working-class old Londoners who regarded the vagaries of the modern world with a kind of affectionate bemusement. Sewell did not pretend to understand the Klingons at the bar and had no idea what made them tick. But he was glad of the work and happy to be of use. I'm guessing that he accepted it as just another gig, another stop on the showbiz circuit.

If there really is an afterlife for British actors I hope that it is not like the Cult TV festival - that haunted hotel beside the roundabout. But if it is I imagine Sewell will take it in his stride. He'll find a cosy table near the bar, sign a few autographs and have a chat with the ghosts who wander by. Some of these, naturally, will be big fans of *UFO*. But others will surely remember his work with Loach and Littlewood, Anderson and Kubrick. Who knows? It might even be a festival about "the real world"; the one he always wanted to attend.

Explore more on these topics

- [Stage](#)
- [Theatre blog](#)
- [blogposts](#)

[Share](#)

[Reuse this content](#)

Comments (...)

[Sign in](#) or [create your Guardian account](#) to join the discussion

Most viewed

Most viewed

- [Film](#)
- [Music](#)
- [TV & radio](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Art & design](#)
- [Stage](#)
- [Games](#)
- [Classical](#)

- [News](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Sport](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)

Original reporting and incisive analysis, direct from the Guardian every morning

[Sign up for our email](#)

- [About us](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Complaints & corrections](#)
- [SecureDrop](#)
- [Work for us](#)
- [Privacy policy](#)
- [Cookie policy](#)
- [Terms & conditions](#)
- [Contact us](#)
- [All topics](#)
- [All writers](#)
- [Modern Slavery Act](#)
- [Tax strategy](#)
- [Digital newspaper archive](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Advertise with us](#)
- [Guardian Labs](#)
- [Search jobs](#)
- [Patrons](#)

[Back to top](#)

© 2025 Guardian News & Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved. (dcr)



