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original  
tales of  
the surreal  
the bizarre  
the macabre

# KOLCHAK

The Night Stalker Chronicles

Edited by  
Joe Gentile  
Garrett Anderson  
Lori Gentile

KOLCHAK  
created by  
Jeff Rice



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# K O L C H A K

## The Night Stalker Chronicles

Edited by Joe Gentile  
Garrett J. Anderson  
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# INTRODUCTION

When Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* in 1816, her intention was to make a statement about man's hubris in believing he, like God, could participate in the act of creation. While Shelley's theme remains powerful, in truth she herself was responsible for an act of creation that is, in some ways, no less awesome than Dr. Frankenstein's monster.

In writing *Frankenstein*, Shelley gave birth to a character who has truly taken on a life of his own, surviving over the centuries not just in her original novel, but in thousands of adaptations in every medium devised since then, from movies and television to comic books and the Internet.

The *Frankenstein* monster speaks to something in our souls that resonates through the generations. Like great characters in Greek mythology, the Bible, Shakespeare and Dickens, *Frankenstein* connects to our own ideas about who we are, and what it means to be human. We return to him again and again because there is something in his character that helps us make sense of our own lives.

Carl Kolchak would have seemed an unlikely character to take on this sort of rich after-life. Born in Jeffrey Rice's unpublished novel, Kolchak was introduced to the rest of the world in that most perishable of art forms, the TV movie of the week, in January 1972. Kolchak immediately struck a deep and resounding chord, breaking records with a 33.2 rating, or an incredible share of the viewing audience (those are numbers rivaled only by the Super Bowl on day).

Another TV movie followed, then a short and commercially unsuccessful TV series in 1974. That would have seemed to be the end of it. Unlike *Star Trek*, there were no movies, no spinoffs, no merchandising bonanzas. Kolchak seemed to die a premature death. And yet... he didn't.

For reasons that readers of this volume can appreciate, Kolchak refuses to go away. He may never achieve the archetypal significance of *Frankenstein*, but in his own way Kolchak is proving himself remarkably enduring.

Looking back on him now, it's easy to guess at how and why Kolchak struck such a chord when he was first introduced, in the pre-Watergate, post-hippie haze of the early '70s. Kolchak was part of the establishment, yet against it. He was in it for himself, yet determined to pursue the truth, even against his own best interests. His voice, and voice-overs, bore echoes of the hard-boiled detective genre, gumshoes like Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade. And yet he had incredible humor and great appeal.

There's no doubt, brilliant though Rice's creation and Richard Matheson's teleplays were, that Kolchak wouldn't have been such a rich character had he not been played by the great Darren McGavin. McGavin seemed to instantly understand the character and enlarge him. As Kolchak, McGavin gave every scene a seemingly impossible combination of wit, bravado, cowardice and charm.

McGavin, like Kolchak, looked like he had seen enough of life's ups and downs to earn the right to be cynical. And yet Kolchak is no cynic. He is an idealist, telling anyone who'll listen he's pursuing the big story for himself, when in truth he's doing it for others. He is that most endearing of characters, the hero who doesn't know he's a hero.

It's almost impossible to write about Kolchak without affection. He is such a convincing creation that, once we've met him - whether it be on TV or in one of the stories collected here -- we feel like we know him. And always will.

If Carl Kolchak never truly lived and breathed - if, like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, he was only the product of a writer's imagination - then he should have. Because in his world-weary eyes, we see reflected back at us not just someone we recognize - but the better part of ourselves.

Frank Spotnitz  
Executive Producer, NIGHT STALKER (2005)

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