

# Watch this space

Director Ron Howard's new series on humans colonising Mars is out of this world, writes

**SHANNON MOLLOY**

HOLLYWOOD legend Ron Howard is many things – famed actor, busy producer, acclaimed director, doting father and, more recently, a passionate advocate for the colonisation of Mars.

Make no mistake, man will set foot on the red planet within two decades, and it'll be more than a passing visit, he says.

According to Howard, we will resettle a chunk of our population there in a bid to save our species.

"I always thought of Mars like how I'd thought of the moon – a place to go to better humanity's understanding, a terrific and romantic idea," he says.

That was until he started work on the bold new TV series *MARS* and concluded that settling there is our only hope of survival.

"As I began to read more and talk to experts, I saw it very differently," Howard says. "I saw immediate colonisation of Mars as a very wise idea, a worthy ambition and a way of perpetuating our species and restoring this planet before it's too late."

The show is part modern-



day documentary featuring an array of experts, and part high-spec drama telling the fictional tale of a manned mission to our planetary neighbour in the year 2033.

Howard insists this isn't pie-in-the-sky thinking, but a magnificent glimpse at our very real future. "It's just around the corner," he says.

Howard has long been fascinated with space. In the '90s, he put that passion into his work and directed

blockbuster film *Apollo 13*, as well as producing the TV miniseries *From The Earth To The Moon*.

"I have a very poetic relationship with the night sky," he says.

"I appreciate the beauty of it, its incomprehensibility. It doesn't make me want to go, but the deeper mystery of it astounds me."

Exploring new frontiers has been a constant theme throughout his life. At four,

Howard's family drove from New York to Los Angeles so his parents could pursue their Hollywood ambitions.

It was the same humble age Howard started working, with an acting role in the film *The Journey*.

"I remember the magic of making that story come to life," he says. "I was caught up in the idea of reaching people through the lens of a camera. That gave me a sense of adventure."

When he made the leap from TV actor – on the back of his starring role as Richie Cunningham in *Happy Days* – to film director in his mid-20s, it was in search of that familiar boyhood feeling.

"I've always used this job to fuel that original sense of adventure I felt. Otherwise I'm a pretty cautious person in life," he says. "The shows and movies are what opens me up to the world in ways I'd be too timid to embrace."

Just as he followed in his father's footsteps, his daughter Bryce is also a successful film and TV actor.

As well as a captivating screen presence, she is famous for a distinct, high-pitched and booming laugh.

"You know, she was so quiet as a baby. Really quiet," Howard laughs.

"One day – she was about 18 months old, I guess – I was on the other side of the house when I heard this shrieking noise. I thought, 'What is that? Is someone in here?'"

"I rushed over to see Bryce being pulled around on a blanket by our puppy, a terrier named Frisky. She was riding it like a sleigh, laughing her head off."

"It was the first time I heard that big, beautiful laugh. She found her voice that day."

**MARS**  
SUNDAY, 7.30PM,  
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

## DA SILVA SHOWS HER SERIOUS SIDE

AS the season finale of *Doctor Doctor* airs this week, Nicole da Silva says fans should continue to expect the unexpected for our country-town characters.

"What's great about *Doctor Doctor* is that you have to expect not only levity, but tragedy," says da Silva, who plays Charlie, the former

flame of lead character Hugh Knight (Rodger Corser).

"It runs a perfect balance between the two."

Certainly, tragedy has touched Charlie this season.

One of the biggest talking points was when she and her husband (Ryan Johnson) experienced an ectopic pregnancy – a break from

the usually light and often comedic storylines her character is gifted.

"I really cherished that storyline," da Silva says.

The actor also says she was humbled by feedback from fans.

"They were grateful for having that kind of heartbreak represented

on screen because it's something so many people go through," she says. "I felt a weight of responsibility to those who have walked that path to make sure I did their story justice."

**DOCTOR DOCTOR**  
WEDNESDAY, 8.30PM, NINE

By Tiffany Dunk

