With just one week to go, **Steven Moffat**, the creative force behind **Doctor Who**, gives us his exclusive guide to the thrill-packed new season. And guess what – it’s the scariest yet...

Ah, it’s that time of year again. If you close your eyes and wish your hardest, you can just about hear them – the Tardis engines grinding in the sky. The Doctor is coming back.

When last seen, he tumbled down a chimney on Christmas Eve and saved a bad man’s soul, but darker days now lie ahead for the last of the Time Lords. The Silence, the unseen enemy who blew up his Tardis last year, have laid deeper plans and set the deadliest trap of all – one that has been ticking away in the Doctor’s life for longer than anyone knows.

Newlyweds Amy and Rory are caught up in a century-spanning scheme, and somewhere out there, in a storm-lashed prison, River Song is getting ready to tell the Doctor something that will change his life for ever.

By Lake Silencio, on the Plain of Sighs, a story will begin and end. A good man is going to die, an impossible life will begin, and our heroes will set out on the long road to the deadliest secret in the universe – and when it stare you in the face, you might just discover you’ve known about it all along.

This year **Doctor Who** happens twice. Seven episodes now, a cliffhanger that changes everything, then six more episodes after the summer. But that’s not all that is changing.

Last year was a rollercoaster: Matt Smith’s amazing new Doctor came bursting out of the Tardis and tried every ride in the funfair – except one. It’s time to step aboard the ghost train.

Welcome to new monsters, new terrors and **Doctor Who** season six. Hold tight!

**Steven Moffat** is head writer and executive producer of **Doctor Who**, co-creator of **Sherlock**, and winner of a Royal Television Society award for an outstanding contribution to television.

**MATT SMITH ON THE DOCTOR’S FUTURE AND STEVEN MOFFAT’S UNMISSABLE EPISODE GUIDE**
‘The Doctor gets to flirt’

Matt Smith on the life and loves of a Time Lord

He has plenty to smile about. Filming of the new series as the nation’s favourite Time Lord – including a cinematic jaunt to Monument Valley, USA – is inching towards completion, as his portrayal of Christopher Isherwood in Christopher and His Kind has received glowing notices and today Matt Smith is given a beamer a drink with model girlfriend Daisy Lowe. And then he has to spoil it all by saying something stupid.

‘What cheese does a horse wear to a ball?’ he volunteers. Don’t know, comes our reply. ‘Mars’ carat?’

‘That’s not a joke-teller,’ he adds, possibly unnecessarily. ‘And yet I want to be funny.’

Of course, there’s a big difference between being a joke-teller and being funny. Smith, it can be safely said, is probably the former but is certainly the latter. He’s succeeded David Tennant with a Doctor who is, above all, playful, fusing a child-like inquisitiveness with an offbeat sense of humour to create a character a million miles away from the William Hartnell original, yet unquestionably the same. In an era when being ‘dark’ is automatically assumed to equate with being good, Smith’s way is refreshingly bold. His playful approach might be tested in the forthcoming series, however, for despite an episode of piratical swashbuckling, there will also be the Silence, an enemy as grim as anything he’s faced before, a threat that is nobody’s idea of a laughing matter: marriage. One episode, written by bestselling author Neil Gaiman, is called The Doctor’s Wife. Is he really going to tie the intergalactic knot?

‘He’s too much of a space bachelor,’ Smith says, pootling about in a high. ‘The universe is his mistress and he’s not going to give her up for anyone! Yet with Amy and Rory married, one might imagine the Doctor feels a little locked out of their love-life.

‘If it finds marriage all rather peculiar, I have to say. To him, spending his whole life with someone is an alien concept. Should he meet the girl of his dreams and they travel around together? Naaah! He wants to keep them coming. He loves the attention of a beautiful young lady on his arm. The Doctor gets to flirt – he gets all that – he just doesn’t get all the rubbish stuff. He doesn’t have to clean up!’

Of course, Smith isn’t going to answer, but you have to ask anyway. Is he going to get it on with River Song, Alex Kingston’s intriguing woman of mystery?

‘Maybe the Doctor will pack it all in and go live in a shack with River, but I can’t see it’ he muses. ‘I think he’s always going to have the element of a mad man with a box, which I really like.’ During the past three years, the Doctor and River’s lives have often intersected but in the wrong time order. ‘What Steven Moffat has done with those two characters is so clever because she knows more than him. Obviously, for the Doctor that’s a rarity, because usually he knows the most. He doesn’t like not knowing the most. He knows the science, but River knows the future.’

Now deep into his second series, Smith has fully embraced the culture of the programme and the depth of feeling it evokes in so many. ‘Doctor Who is brilliant,’ he states unequivocally. ‘Science fiction invites conspiratorial thinking, which I also think is brilliant. Why not sit at home on the computer and be conspiratorial? There are worse ways of spending an evening.’

What were his obsessions when he was younger? ‘Football, really, was my obsession,’ he replies, with reference to his truncated time playing as a schoolboy for Nottingham Forest and Leicester City. ‘It was my only obsession like that. I suppose. Everyone has faith in something, doesn’t he? I think. But these matters are unto the gods!’

How long does he expect that involvement to continue? ‘I take it by year by year,’ he says. ‘I would hope that this year wouldn’t be my last, but you don’t know. I would like to do next year as well, I think. But these matters are unto the gods.’

The gods seem to be smiling. So long as the Doctor’s darkest hour is now. And the Doctor’s darkest hour is now. Want to find the most dangerous place in the universe? Easy. Harm a hair on Amy’s head and just wait. But as the last of the Time Lords and undefeatable new producer, looking at his BlackBerry, ‘The roof’s fallen in.’ You’ll see.

‘Oh dear,’ said Marcus Wilson, our steadfast Director, before turning to us, ‘What do you mean by “The roof’s fallen in?”’

‘No, it’s not a metaphor,’ said Marcus, warily. ‘It’s the roof. It’s actually fallen in?’ For a shoot that involved a collapsing location and, for a while, a director (hello, Julian Simpson) on puntknappers and a walking stick, this is a cracker of a two-parter.

Get behind the sofa now – reserve your place. If you, like me, have always longed for a movie about an alien shape-changer and an industrial dispute, this is the one for you. Yes, it’s Life on Mars/Ashes to Ashes.

Toby Haynes

THE ULTIMATE EPISODE GUIDE BY STEVEN MOFFAT

THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

On painkillers and a walking stick, this is a cracker of a two-parter.