Doctor Who is coming to town!

Steven Moffat, the man behind Sherlock and Doctor Who, reveals the four secrets of a classic Christmas special.

1 Santa Claus is real
And I don’t mean as an idea or a legend or, God help us, a brand – I mean as a fat man in red, living at the North Pole with elves and flying reindeer. He’s not a legend, or a story – he’s just a nice guy with a beard who, once a year, on a whim, happens to give presents to children all over the world in a single night. Frankly, if there were 364 more men like him, we’d all wake up a lot happier every day. Really good Christmas movies affirm this simple truth. And anyway, surely if any man was likely to be a personal friend of the Doctor’s, it would be him? They’re probably up there right now, in the snow, high-flying and laughing about sledges and police boxes, and who’s loonier!

2 There should be flying
I don’t mean in a plane, or a helicopter or something boring like that. I mean flying like you do in your dreams over towns at night, round chimneys, through washing lines, with people looking up and laughing because they can’t believe their eyes!

3 Christmas special
It’s an occasion, a tradition; a magical time. It’s not just a bit of decoration or a bit of packaging; it’s the thing itself. Christmas special: that’s what it’s all about. It’s a time to come together, to indulge in the spirit of the season and let your imagination run riot. And there’s no better place to do that than on the big screen, where stories come alive and dreams can be realised.

4 The Doctor’s back!
He’s the ultimate wild man, the ultimate loner, the ultimate misfit. He’s a man out of time, out of place, out of control. And that’s what makes him so perfect for Christmas. He’s the one who can’t stay still, who can’t be tamed, who can’t be caught. He’s the one who can fly, who can leap, who can jump. He’s the one who can do anything, who can be anything, who can be anyone. He’s the one who can be the Doctor, who can be the Man, who can be the hero. He’s the one who can be everything, who can be anything, who can be anyone. He’s the one who can be the Doctor Who, the one who can be the Man Who Fell To Earth.
3 Snow!
Because this is a meteorological fact that I can prove with graphs and lying. It snows EVERY CHRISTMAS DAY. Oh, shut up, what do you know? Forget what actually happens, nothing could matter less. Every Christmas morning, when you throw open your curtains, the world is covered in a giant white napkin, and even though they aren't actually open, schools close anyway.

4 The greatest Christmas story is A Christmas Carol...
...and there's no point trying to beat it. Hmm. Number 4 was a sore point. Because we all know that Charles Dickens is a personal friend of the Doctor's, so he obviously couldn't find himself re-enacting his mate's biggest hit, without noticing. It drove me mad, that one, as I paced my LA ice cavern, living only on roast chestnuts sold to me by street urchins (actually, I'm starting to wonder if those were real). The answer, of course, was obvious. And available to you on Christmas Day! It's a very different adventure for the Doctor. The man who saves planets has to save a soul. Instead of fighting a monster, he's going to cure one. Instead of fighting a monster, the Doctor's going to cure one.

But just in case you think you're in for an easy ride, keep an eye on the fog - because I wouldn't be a bit surprised if there was something in them. And keep that space clear behind the sofa - because in a very few months the new series is coming, and darker days for the Doctor and his friends. Silence will fall! River Song will, at long last, introduce herself. The true nature of the relationship between Amy Pond and her Doctor will be revealed. And most importantly, a good man will die - a good man, and a hero to many.

At Glastonbury you were on stage with Orbital as they performed the Doctor Who theme. What exactly were you doing? [Laughs.] I was fiddling! Turning up equalisers, pressing a piano that obviously was playing stuff! I was looking very busy. Just doing a bit of acting really. Actually, I was very nervous. I just thought there would be loads of people dancing to Orbital going, "Who the hell's this guy? Get him off!" Of course it was a real fun moment, and something I'll never get to do again. To be that side of the stage and looking over at Glastonbury, it's the closest I'll ever get to being a rock star.

Following David Tennant as the Doctor can't have been easy, but you seem to have won people over as the series has progressed. I never set out with the intention to win people over, because I couldn't; it would have damaged every artistic instinct in me. So I always just set out with my instinct and being true to that. You hear about the press reaction from other people - I never read reviews. Either I'm Daniel Day-Lewis or I'm toilet, and all the stuff in between is irrelevant. And I'm far too sensitive and far too vain to be able to take the abuse on the internet.

You must have developed a sense, though, of how your interpretation was being received? Actually, that has really been the coolest thing this year. I've met little boys of eight or nine and they'll see you and suddenly there's a silence and then, "Whoa! You're Doctor Who. Are you real? Wow!" And you know what? It's nothing to do with me - it's that character, that show.

Where did you watch the first episode? We had a bit of a knees-up round at Steven Moffat's house. You're in a room full of 15 people...