

**THE A TEAM**  
Amy (Karen Gillan) with  
the 11th Doctor (Matt  
Smith). But will the  
friends be reunited?

# Best job in the universe

Too scary? Too complicated? *Doctor Who* supremo **Steven Moffat** answers his critics, and says we can look forward to... roll of the drums... more cliffhangers

**Doctor Who**  
Saturday 6.40pm BBC1, BBC1 HD

**F**OR A MAN who has the entire universe, past, present and future at his fingertips, Steven Moffat doesn't half live in a normal street. The germ of each episode of the intergalactic, time-bending extravaganza that is *Doctor Who* is born in an upstairs room in a semi-detached house in leafy south London. There are even roses around the front door, for goodness' sake. The only clue to Moffat's genius lies in a display case in the sitting room that is crowded with television gongs, and a small boy leaping around the hall in a dressing gown and wig, waving a sword.

"I'm a monk!" yells Moffat Jr. His father regards him fondly. Apparently dressing up as monsters like the monks on our cover that their father invented is just what the two Moffat boys like to do. "They invent them, draw them, write about their powers," says Moffat. "That's what I did when I was a child, and I entirely failed to grow out of it."

The Moffat day seems to be thus: Wake up. See children and wife – TV producer Sue Vertue – off to school and work respectively. Walk upstairs to office. Sit down and start conjuring up monsters for the greatest television show ever invented. Feel happy about it.

"Just think," he says, warming to his favourite topic, which is (and sounds like it always has been) *Doctor Who*. "The main character can adapt to fit any era. The show never feels old. It certainly doesn't feel like a relic from 1963, even though it has a police box that nobody alive can ever remember using, at the heart of it. Our arena is anywhere in the universe at any point in time. And that's a bit better than a hospital waiting room, isn't it?"

Yes, well there certainly aren't spooky aliens in *Casualty*, mercifully. I mean, doesn't he think *DW* is veering into seriously scary territory at the moment? The Silence aren't much better than those awful gas-mask zombies Moffat came up with in his *Doctor Who* debut story in 2005, which had my lot walking around intoning "Are You My Mummy?" for weeks. Even the recent episode in which Rory horrifies Amy by morphing into an ancient man, then a grinning skeleton, had them all hiding behind the sofa.

Moffat laughs with delight. "It is

horror, but horror for children. It's scary in the way that a fairy story can be scary. The key is that it has to be the level of horror that a man with ridiculous hair and a bow tie can deal with."

Moffat has a great story about the last Christmas special. "We did two private screenings, one for adults and one for children. In the adult one, everyone roared their heads off laughing. But with the kids' screening, the children were very focused and serious, and got very cross with the few adults there who were laughing. They said, 'What are you laughing at? This is serious, and this is frightening.'"

**S**O WHO DOES he write for? Neither children or adults, it seems. "I just think, what is a great *Doctor Who* story? I write it to entertain me. You can't write to entertain anyone else, because then you are making assumptions about what other people would like."

Given the massive success of the show, does that make Moffat a sort of Everyman, with tastes that coincide with the majority of the nation? "Well, I have had some magnificent failures! But I don't think I have wildly esoteric tastes. And what people like in stories is common to us all; and *Doctor Who* is a pure example of storytelling."

Moffat is as pleased as punch with the way his latest Time Lord is working out. "He is astonishing. And you haven't seen anything yet." We agree that Matt Smith has comprehensively dispelled the sterling work of his predecessor, the sneaker-wearing, wise-cracking David Tennant. "Matt is so shy and bumbling, and gets progressively madder. But I always say the Doctors are not in competition. It's a relay race." Really? Is he contemplating Smith's successor already? Moffat looks at me sternly. "Matt Smith is signed up for ever. For the rest of time."

Is that the same with Moffat himself? Being the *Doctor Who* showrunner – head writer and overall Time >

"I want more to watch it regularly. So we're bringing the cliffhanger back in force"

STEVEN MOFFAT

## Who's watching?

So how are the viewing figures? Overnight ratings – the ones quoted in the press – for the series opener may be down from the last series: 6.5 million viewers compared to an average of 8 million in 2010, but Steven Moffat has an explanation: "The audience is changing the way it's watching through iPlayer and Sky+, he says. "So the finished rating is more like 10.1 million."

**HEROES AND VILLAINS**  
This week's story, which sees River Song (Alex Kingston, far right) rejoining Amy and Rory, finally unmasks the mysterious Eye-patch lady (Frances Barber, below)



◀ Lord of the series – seems to have been his life-long ambition, right from his childhood in Paisley, Scotland. He says he can even remember the first ever Doctor, William Hartnell, which is impressive since he's not yet 50. Yet looking after the *DW* brand is clearly a pretty wearing business. Coming up with all those monsters week in, week out. Apparently Moffat only had one day off last year, which was Christmas Day.

**T**HERE HAVE BEEN a few grumbles of late about the plotlines and their perceived complexity. "Well, you have to pay attention," says Moffat severely. He sounds like a teacher, and then I remember he was an English teacher in his 20s. "You can't watch it when you are doing the ironing. And you certainly can't watch it when you are tweeting. You have to sit down and focus, and a child audience certainly does that. Are *your* children confused by it?" No, they aren't, I confess.

Might we see a moment where Moffat decides to relax a bit, and takes his brilliant imagination off to Hollywood? "Ha! I'm not short of movie offers to write," he says gleefully. "But my heart is in television. Everyone prefers television, don't they? Everyone *says* they prefer the movies but they don't go very often. I love television."

When the *DW* gig came his way, the story is that Moffat was comfortably ensconced in Hollywood, writing the first *Tintin* film for Steven Spielberg. But when the Tardis started making its calling noise, Moffat got on the first plane home.

"Yep. That really happened. I left LA to come and do *Doctor Who*. It's all true. I took a massive pay cut and the prospect of much harder work, all for the sake of British television. Why? Because I love *Doctor Who*."

He really does. The character who was essentially invented as a way of bridging the gap between children's

## "We thought it was about time to give the Daleks a rest"

afternoon shows and adult evening programmes has – according to Moffat – become a dramatic colossus, striding into our lives like almost no other character, televisual or otherwise, has done since the days of classical mythology. And this is a man whose BBC1 hit *Sherlock*, which he created with Mark Gatiss, has just notched up two Baftas, including best drama series.

"*Doctor Who* is the ideal television hero because he has the power to change. And what a great role model for children. His superpowers are that he's incredibly bright, and learned, and he's incredibly kind. When it comes down to it, the Doctor is simply and purely heroic.

"He's so decent. He's not a professional. He's not looking for trouble, just something nice to do – to go to a beach, or meet Marie Antoinette. But he's always the last man standing, the man who will

always stand his ground and fight danger." And this week's episode, *A Good Man Goes to War*, gives him just such a platform when, with Amy kidnapped, the Doctor and Rory go racing across galaxies to come to her aid.

Will the Doctor face his most dastardly opponents? Moffat laughs. "Oh yes, the Daleks. Actually, they aren't going to make an appearance for a while." What? "Yes, we thought it was about time to give them a rest. There's a problem with the Daleks." How come? I thought they were invincible. "They are the most famous of the Doctor's adversaries and the most frequent," explains Moffat. "Which means they are the most reliably defeatable enemies in the universe. They have been defeated by the Doctor about 400 times. Surely they should just see the Tardis approaching, say, 'Oh. It's him again', and trudge away."

**W**E SIT ON Moffat's sofa, sniggering about the Daleks and their hopelessness. The comedy in the series is of course one of its key strengths. "The secret with *Doctor Who* is that the show laughs at itself. It's not above pointing out its own limitations," says Moffat. This is why it is a great family show.

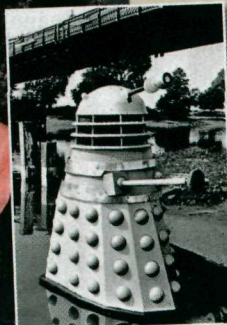
Suspense, shock, cliffhangers; it does seem to pack them in. He's very proud of episode seven, which signals the moment the series takes a summer break. Having a couple of months' hiatus will give Moffat the chance to bring back an important element to the show.

"The only thing that was missing when *Doctor Who* came back this time was that there weren't enough cliffhangers. Do you remember in the old days? The music crashing in just as the Doctor finds out... well, I love that. Plus it encourages the audience to come back. I know that people dip in and out of the show, but I want more to watch it regularly. So we are bringing the cliffhanger back in force."

So who are his favourite monsters? "Well I think the Weeping Angels stand me in good stead. And the Silence. You can't remember them, so that's good." He loves the moments of high drama, too. "When the Doctor is standing at Stonehenge speaking to all the spaceships, that was good. Or when the Spitfires go into space to attack the Dalek spaceship." He shakes his head. "It doesn't half make Saturday nights a bit more fun."

➔ Weekly blog at [radiotimes.com/who-blog](http://radiotimes.com/who-blog)

## Doctor Who's best cliffhangers



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| <p><b>The Dalek Invasion of Earth (1964)</b><br/>London in the 22nd century lies in ruins and, after 25 minutes of suspense, the first Doctor (William Hartnell) finds out who the invaders are. A Dalek rises from the Thames...</p> | <p><b>The Green Death (1973)</b><br/>The third Doctor (Jon Pertwee) and Jo (Katy Manning) are trapped when a Welsh coalmine collapses. Through the rubble emerge giant maggots, hissing through fanged mouths...</p> | <p><b>The Stolen Earth (2008)</b><br/>Running to be reunited at last with Rose (Billie Piper), the tenth Doctor (David Tennant) is shot by a Dalek. The Time Lord is carried back to the Tardis by his friends, where a completely unexpected regeneration begins...</p> |
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