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MAKING A HOUSE CALL TO THE 'DOCTOR'

WHO KNEW? FANS OF BRITISH SCI-FI SERIES FLOCK TO INDIANA FOR TARDIS, DALEK NEEDS

By David Lindquist
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The building's exterior is beige, boxy and bland, offering few clues to the fantastical items sold inside.

But on a recent Saturday afternoon, a "My other car is a TARDIS" bumper sticker in the parking lot helped visitors know that they had arrived at the continent's top retailer of "Doctor Who" memorabilia.

Once a month, Who North America, a warehouse/store on the Westside, opens its doors to "Whovians," the nickname associated with fans of the sci-fi TV series

WHO NORTH AMERICA OPEN HOUSE

- » **WHEN:** 2 to 6 p.m. March 15.
- » **WHERE:** Who North America, 2040 S. Lynhurst Drive, Suite A.
- » **ADMISSION:** Free.
- » **INFORMATION:** Visit WhoNA.com or call (317) 481-8189.

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DINING À LA FRENCH MANORS

A renovated Victorian farmhouse near Sheridan seems an unlikely place to open a French restaurant. But Didier and Florence Fraikin followed their dreams.
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KINGS & QUEENS OF COUNTRY

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Who

Continued from T1

that debuted on the British Broadcasting Corp. in 1963.

High interest in the time-traveling Doctor isn't a prerequisite to visit Who North America, 2040 S. Lynhurst Drive. The monthly open house is free of charge to anyone. For the uninitiated, "TARDIS" is an acronym for "Time and Relative Dimension in Space" and also the vehicle that allows the Doctor to travel in those dimensions.

There's more than meets the eye for both the Doctor's TARDIS and Who North America. On the outside, the TARDIS resembles a commonplace blue Police Box used for emergency phone calls in 20th-century Great Britain. Inside, it's infinite in size, boasting a spacecraft's control room, living quarters and library.

Within the business park facade of Who North America, more than 2,000 different pieces of "Doctor Who" memorabilia are displayed in a 4,760-square-foot showroom. "It's bigger on the inside," as they say on the TV show.

And just as timing is everything for the Doctor, the owners of Who North America launched their business when this part of the world was something less than a Whovian hotbed.

New episodes of "Doctor Who" weren't even being made in 1998, when Keith Bradbury scouted the burgeoning World Wide Web for U.K. retailers of model Daleks and Cybermen (two types of evil cyborgs in the "Who" story) and other memorabilia.

He asked about the possibility of buying items in the States and was told, "We'd love to get our products over there. There's just no body willing to carry it."

Bradbury then asked his wife, Jany, if she wanted to get into the "Doctor Who" business. "I talked to my wife and said, 'Are you willing to invest \$1,000 to get some products over here?'" Keith said. "But we did it. Within a week, we had to order more, because there was so much demand for the items."

What began as a hobby for the Bradburys became the full-fledged Who North America company in 2005, the same year the BBC relaunched "Doctor Who" as a TV series.

The "new 'Who'" has thrived as a cult favorite on this side of the Atlantic, where viewers can catch episodes on cable network BBC America as



Who North America co-owner Jany Bradbury welcomes visitors to the store, 2040 S. Lynhurst Drive, Suite A.

well as on Netflix or Hulu.

The next open house at Who North America is scheduled for 2 to 6 p.m. March 15. The Feb. 22 open house attracted an elbow-to-elbow crowd of Hoosier Whovians, plus visitors from Ohio and Colorado.

For 19-year-old Fishers resident Jacob Foley, a visit to Who North America was a surprise Valentine's Day gift from his girlfriend, Ali Smith. "It's awesome," Foley said. "I want everything in here."

Foley estimates he's seen every episode of the seven seasons of "new 'Who'" three or four times.

"I love the way British TV is done, compared to here," he said. "Doctor Who" is designed to be a kids show, but yet it's still one of those shows that adults watch all the time and love."

Foley planned to purchase two replica "sonic screwdrivers," the do-everything tool used by "Doctor Who" characters.

Denver resident Michelle Talkington, in Indianapolis to visit her mother, said she appreciates the show's nonviolent message.

"They didn't give (the Doctor) a gun," Talkington said. "They gave him a screwdriver to fix things."

A staff member at Denver Comic Con, Talkington said her convention is planning 25 hours of "Doctor Who" programming June 13-15.

Talkington purchased a "Doctor Who" Yahtzee game at Who North America, while Cincinnati resident Kira Hammergren bought a pop-up book titled "Space Travels" featuring David Tennant, the actor who portrayed the 10th Doctor (2005-2010), on its cover.

Hammergren describes herself as a second-generation Whovian. "My mom raised me on Tom Baker," said Hammergren, making a reference to the fourth Doctor (1974-1981) known for his floppy hat and multi-colored scarf.

The time-travel aspect of "Doctor Who" keeps Hammergren engaged with the show, which introduced its 12th Doctor, Peter Capaldi, during a 50th-anniversary episode last November.

"They can do any story, at any time and anywhere," she said. "It appeals to the best of us while looking at the worst of us. There's nothing it can't do."

Tony Troxell, a frequent Who North America customer who blogs at GeekingInIndiana.com, said time-travel stories are difficult for viewers to resist.



Who North America is the top North American retailer of "Doctor Who" memorabilia.

"For some, it's just to see where we're going and hoping things are better," Troxell said. "For some, it's going back to fix past mistakes."

Troxell said he's always on the lookout for imported Jelly Babies at Who North America. The English candy — similar to a gummi confection, but with a more rigid texture — has been a favorite of multiple Doctors.

Food in "Doctor Who" lore also resonates with Indianapolis resident Matt Hofmann, who said he wore celery stalks on borrowed suit jackets when making "Doctor Who" fan films as a teenager.

Fashion-accessory celery was a trademark of Peter Davison, the fifth Doctor (1981-1984). Who North America brought Davison to Indianapolis for the 2013 edition of Gen Con, and the company plans to have a prominent presence at the first-ever Indiana PopCon, scheduled May 30 to June 1 at the Indiana Convention Center.

While the Bradburys spend most of their time processing online orders at WhoNA.com, they also schedule weekday visits by appointment.

"Anything that's out there, you're going to find it here," said Hoffman, who fashioned a TARDIS out of a refrigerator box when making his "Doctor Who" fan films. "You don't have to go to toy stores and try to

find stuff that they won't have."

★ Call Star reporter David Lindquist at (317) 444-6404. Follow him on Twitter: @317Lindquist.

Visitors to Who North America can visit the "museum room," but its contents are not for sale. MICHELLE PEMBERTON / THE STAR

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