

Doctor Who: The Next Regeneration

Peter Capaldi takes over the TARDIS for the Time Lord's fantastical new adventures.

BY AUBRY D'ARMINIO

The clock motif now over the TARDIS's console (and elsewhere inside the vehicle) also appears in Season 8's new opening titles, which were inspired by a fan-made credit sequence the producers found on YouTube.



Peter Capaldi remembers the car that came to his London home last August to drive him to the live TV special that revealed him to be *Doctor Who*'s newest star. Because it only took him to a parking lot. "Like in a cheap British spy movie, I was dropped off and told to wait for another car to pick me up," says the actor, whose first full episode in the title role is the Season 8 premiere, airing August 23. "Then I was put in the backseat, covered in a blanket, and taken away to become the Doctor. This is a true story."

Here's the thing about *Doctor Who*: Its hero is a time-traveling alien (species: Time Lord) who periodically regenerates into a whole new being. Many actors have portrayed the "numbered" Docs—First Doctor (William Hartnell), Second Doctor (Patrick Troughton), up to Number Eleven (Matt Smith). Last November's 50th-anniversary special, *The Day of the Doctor*, featured John Hurt as renegade incarnation the War Doctor, but Capaldi's newbie will still be Number Twelve. You know, so it's not confusing.

Four years ago, the British sci-fi drama was a cult curiosity around the world. Then Smith's marvelously cheerful Eleventh Doctor caught on. *The Day of the Doctor* aired simultaneously in 94 countries (a Guinness world record)—and 2.4 million people in the United States tuned in to watch on BBC America. The series is the BBC's most lucrative property, and spoilers are guarded like a baby prince. Hence Capaldi's crazy ride.

So what's cool about the new guy? Smith and his predecessor, David Tennant, were both under 35 when they got behind the controls of the TARDIS (the Doctor's signature spaceship), while Capaldi is 56. Executive producers Steven Moffat and Brian Minchin wanted an older actor, in part to convey the character's weariness following last season's travails. They also didn't fancy another charmer. "We wanted a Doctor who felt unpredictable," Minchin says, "to make him dangerous." So Number Twelve is rude and unreliable but still dedicated to saving the universe. Capaldi, a star in Britain for his portrayal of a potty-mouthed political strategist on the comedy *The Thick of It*, was their top choice.

In conversation, Capaldi, a longtime *Who* fan, often refers to his character incorrectly as "Doctor Who" rather than as "the Doctor"—which is usually how *Who* fans separate the geek from the chaff. But the actor harks back to the show's early days, when its hero was credited as "Doctor Who" on screen.

He's that old-school. In fact, at 14, he so badly wanted to be on the executive council of the Official *Doctor Who* Fan Club that he barged the BBC offices with letters. The producer's secretary was so annoyed, she joked that she hoped the villainous Daleks would set him straight. (She may get her wish in the August 30 episode.) We talked to Capaldi about his *Who* history, darkening up the Doctor, and that nifty navy blue suit.

Rumor has it you burned all of your *Doctor Who* baubles.

I had a great pile of *Doctor Who* stuff:

Tops Trumps [a card game], stamps, scripts, autographs, and stills. Then one day I decided, "I'm not into these anymore. I am a true, wild artist. A bohemian!" I call it my "Bonfire of the Vanities," but it actually wasn't a bonfire. I just threw it all out—not in a ritualistic, *Wicker Man* way.

As a boy, did you dream of one day playing the Doctor? Never. As a kid, I played at being him on the playground, emulating

"Most people meeting Peter don't know him as the Doctor yet," Coleman says of Capaldi (below, signing autographs in Wales in early August). "I can't wait for them to see what I've been seeing for the last eight months."



PREVIOUS SPREAD: BBC/BBC WORLDWIDE 2014. THIS SPREAD: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: BBC/BBC WORLDWIDE 2014 (3); MATTHEW HORWOOD/GC IMAGES; BBC/BBC WORLDWIDE 2014; GUY LEVY/BBC

whichever Doctor was on TV. But I never professionally went, "How can I set about becoming Doctor Who?"

How'd it happen then? My agent asked, "How would you feel about being the new Doctor?" I laughed, because I'd really never thought about it. But as soon as the idea was presented to me, I went, "Oh, how delicious!"

Then what? I was filming [the TV series] *The Musketeers* in Prague, so it took days to get Steven, Brian, [casting director] Andy Pryor, and me in one place. They needed to be secretive. They'd been caught auditioning Matt—found in some seedy hotel in a dodgy bit of town. So they decided the safest spot was Steven's living room. He wrote some scenes specifically for my Doctor.

Moffat says they were extra silly scenes to test you. They were great! One was a regeneration sequence, which I was sorry we never shot. The Doctor couldn't see himself, and he kept asking Clara [his companion, played by Jenna Coleman], "How's the face? Does it look good?" And she's going, "It's OK." He's like, "What do you mean, 'OK'? OK?" And she's saying, "Well, it's got a few lines on it." And he says, "What? Is that all you care...wait, I haven't gone old, have I?"

Would you have taken the role right then? I did ask what their plan for the show was. I didn't want to be Doctor Who in a *Doctor Who* that I didn't like. They also had to decide if they liked me. And I certainly didn't think it was going my way.

Why? Actors always say that. You're concentrating so hard, you don't know what's going on. You feel out of it, and that feels like disaster. I returned to Prague thinking I had great fun, and that's enough. So I was delighted when they sort of said, "Yeah."

Modern, Classic

The new season features a who's who of *Who*-dom.



New Doctor, old *Who*. That's the concept behind the 12-episode eighth season, which—after last year's two gimmicky specials—sees the series return to its simplest form. "The Doctor turns up, gets in trouble, and flies off again," executive producer Steven Moffat says. "It's *Doctor Who* classic."

But where, how, and with whom is the Time Lord causing such kerfuffle? In the season opener, the newly regenerated Doctor and his companion Clara crash land in Victorian London (alongside a time-jumping T. rex) and reteam with fan-favorite detective trio the Paternoster Gang: Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Jenny (Catrin Stewart), and Strax (Dan Starkey). A group of the Doctor's foes, led by the visage-challenged Half Face, is killing the populace as part of a larger plan—and time is ticking away.

Episode 2 (airing August 30) features the Daleks—the Doctor's iconic monomaniacal enemies. Capaldi was so pumped for the climax of this one that he came to work on his day off to watch the shoot. "The schedule said: 'Dalek Attack,'" he recalls. "I thought: I've got to see it. It was like being a kid again."

Next, it's off to Nottingham, where the Doctor tussles with punchably handsome Robin Hood (*Da Vinci's Demons*' Tom Riley), the natty Sheriff (Ben Miller), and robot knights. "Tom plays the Robin Hood you'd always like to meet," Minchin says. "And we didn't have to coax him into the green tights."

The rest of the season will include a stopover on the Doctor's home planet, Gallifrey; his mini-nervous breakdown; the return to the location of a previous adventure; a bank job in space (featuring the creepy new Teller, above); the Doctor working as a school janitor; a horror episode; and an appearance by British pop singer Foxes. While each installment has its own story, an overarching plotline will lead into the finale. You'll recognize it right away, but just in case, here's a hint: There's trouble in paradise. —AD

The Guest List

The Doctor's quirky new acquaintances.



MS. DELPHOX
(Keeley Hawes)

If you managed the universe's most secure bank, as Ms. Delphox does, you'd be fierce, too. The punishment for breaking in? You don't want to know (but you'll find out in Episode 5).



ROBIN HOOD
(Tom Riley)

He's got those matinee-idol looks and Olympic-level archery skills, plus some quixotic optimism that will be on display in the September 6 episode. The Eleventh Doctor would have loved him, but Twelve...



MISSY, GATEKEEPER OF THE NETHER-SPHERE

(Michelle Gomez) Ever seen someone skip menacingly? Missy may look like Mary Poppins, but she's mad-as-a-freaking-hatter in the two-part season finale.

"Sort of?" It's the BBC. Any decision has to go through a pile of people before they can make an announcement. You're fearful that at any point somebody's going to say, "Oh, no, I don't like him." Obviously, then, you approved of Moffat and Minchin's darker Doctor. It's appropriate for somebody my age. Matt and David could be quite dark. But they had a lovely youthful ebullience. My Doctor is more forlorn and trickier to deal with. He's tough to be around, but you do want to be around him. You know those people—you think, "I like that guy, he's really exciting, but he's a bit exhausting and I'm glad I'm not married to him."

You've also referred to him as "rock-and-roll." Hence his mod navy drainpipe trousers. I always saw my Doctor like that, looking very stark. But because *Doctor Who* is such a big show, it was important to allow everyone [at the BBC] who had an idea to see what their idea looked like. I tried on everything that anyone ever suggested.

For example? The worst combinations! The stuff people think is *Doctor Who*: velvet jackets, scarves, a big floppy hat. But I kept going back to simplifying things and going darker until eventually it had the atmosphere that made me feel like the Doctor.

"My Doctor is more forlorn and trickier to deal with. He's tough to be around, but you do want to be around him."—Peter Capaldi

You are wearing a gold ring on the show. Whose idea was that? Doctor Who has worn a ring before. Strangely, before I was cast, I was visiting the set of *An Adventure in Space and Time* [last year's BBC drama about *Doctor Who*'s beginnings], and the granddaughter of First Doctor William Hartnell was also there. She opened this little box of props from the original series. She showed me his fabulous ring. Later, I had a band made with a stone in it [like Hartnell's]. The stone was sent to me by a jeweler whose son wrote this little story that went with it, which was amazingly affecting.

How so? He said the stone represented, and reminded the Doctor of, all the people he's lost in his long life. But it wasn't a sad thing. It was to remember how joyful times could be. If you travel in time and space, most of the people you know and love will eventually be gone. But you'll also be able to go and find them again.

Where will you be when the premiere airs? At a screening in London. It'll be quite scary when my Doctor goes out to the world. But it's magical to have such drama. When I meet people—I haven't really been on the show yet, but there are still lots who recognize me from when Matt regenerated [into my Doctor]—they just smile. They're just pleased to see the Doctor. When you're the person they're smiling at, imagine how wonderful it is.

DOCTOR WHO Saturdays, 8/7c, BBC America

The New Companion



Clara is tickled Pink with her mysterious boyfriend.

Samuel Anderson has no problem being called Mr. Pink. The *Doctor Who* newbie debuts in the August 30 episode as Coal Hill School math teacher Danny Pink—a nice guy with a possibly not-so-nice background whom Clara starts dating. But he's much more than just the companion's companion. After Clara is no longer able to keep her extracurricular activities with the Doctor a secret from Danny, he ends up traversing space and time with the TARDIS crew, joining the illustrious ranks of the Doctor's male companions, which include Jack Harkness (John Barrowman) and Rory Williams (Arthur Darvill).

Not that the Doctor is thrilled. "He wants to make sure Clara is always taken care of," Capaldi says. "And he's not really sure that Danny's the right person to be doing that because of his past."

But how often does Clara listen to the Doctor? "Danny's so lovable," says Coleman. "He's so laid-back. He's a good counterpart to her uptight, control-freak nature. He brings her back to earth, literally and theoretically."

The 32-year-old Anderson, who starred on Broadway and in London in the Tony-winning play *History Boys*, had no idea the part extended beyond a single episode. "I thought, 'That's great; that's easy money for me,'" he says. "I'm the specialist at one-off roles."

Anderson found out the truth from Coleman. The pair had already starred together on the U.K. soap *Emmerdale* (he played a cop, and she was the woman accused of killing one of his colleagues). "I texted Jenna when I got the job, and she texted back, 'A-A-A-A-ugh, this is big,'" the actor says. "And I didn't really know what she meant. Then she wrote, 'I'll call you in five minutes.' And when she called, I heard just a big scream and 'You're in the whole story!'" —AD