IT'S SCARIER, IT'S EDGIER, BEN 'KILL LIST' WHEATLEY'S DIRECTING THE FIRST TWO EPISODES... AND THE NEW DOCTOR IS MALCOLM TUCKER! IT'S DEFINITELY TIME TO TAKE DOCTOR WHO SERIOUSLY
ARLY LAST YEAR, PETER CAPALDI was invited by his friend Mark Gatiss to visit Doctor Who’s Cardiff name centre and see the recreation of William Hartnell’s TARDIS, built for the 50th anniversary drama An Adventure In Space And Time. Gatiss asked Capaldi if he had any ambition to play the Doctor himself and Capaldi replied: “Well, I think that ship has sailed, hasn’t it?” But he noticed that the crew were surprisingly keen to reveal him in the TARDIS.

“I thought, ‘This is really weird.’ It was keeping going around in my head why he’d asked me that,” says Capaldi, sitting in a nondescript room at BBC Cymru Wales. This is his first one-on-one interview since becoming the 12th Doctor so he hasn’t had his ideas down on soundbytes yet. His natural theatricality, speaking in bursts of vivid enthusiasm separated by long pauses for thought. “I didn’t get involved in it until after the speculation had started so I was a spectator, not realising I was a major element,” he continues. “I thought, ‘I wonder who they’re going to get?’ And then suddenly it was me.” When he got the first call from his agent he says: “I laughed very hard, joyfully. It was a incredibly wonderful notion.”

Capaldi has an endearing habit of calling his character Doctor Who instead of the Doctor, which is wrong, as any Whovian will tell you, and strange, because he is a Whoan. He was five when the series first aired and he’s been a fan ever since: letters, autographs, memorabilia, the lot. “Doctor Who was a part of life growing up in the 60s with The Beatles and all that stuff,” he says. “I think it’s part of my DNA.”

What he didn’t know when he visited was that showrunner Steven Moffat had been pondering Capaldi’s Time Lord potential for some time. When he asked Gatiss for a wishlist of contenders to replace the departing Matt Smith, Capaldi’s name was at the top of the list. “I’m used to but that’s showbiz,” he says drily.

“I saw the first episode and it’s amazing how different it feels,” says Jenna Coleman, who plays the Doctor’s current companion, Clara Oswald. “It’s darker. The limits feel like they’re being pushed more in terms of the danger and the dread. It’s a scarier, that’s for sure.”

One thing you notice while talking to Steven Moffat is that running the BBC’s two most hotly debated shows, Doctor Who and Sherlock, is liable to make you somewhat defensive. A natural retort, about the intricate, continuity-aware, timey-wimey storytelling in The Day Of The Doctor (the all-star 50th anniversary special) and The Time Of The Doctor (the Christmas regeneration episode) seems to spark memories of all the reviews and tweets that complained those stories were hard to follow. “I think continuity is a slightly dull word,” he protests. “I would use the word mythology. Obviously with the 50th and the regeneration episode it’s pretty much all the myth. For the most part, you need to know very little to understand Doctor Who. It sort of resets itself. He turns up somewhere, has some adventures, gets back into his TARDIS and flies off.”

He does, however, admit that he’d fallen into some bad habits during the last series. “It was time to change. Certain things we were doing a little reluctantly. Some of the humour was getting a bit glib. One of the hardest things to notice is when your new idea has become your old idea and it’s time to get rid of it.”

The new tone, he says, starts with Capaldi. “It feels counterintuitive to say Doctor Who is a star vehicle when it’s got a changeable role, but it is. You do build your show around your leading man so it was the David Tennant show, then it was the Matt Smith show and now it’s the Peter Capaldi show.”

When Capaldi was revealed on a live TV special last August (“It’s not something I’m used to but that’s showbusiness,” the actor says), the response was almost unanimous approval, with three tweets. Fans wondered what to make of Capaldi’s previous appearance as Roman banker Lucius Corcillius in the 2008 episode The Fires Of Pompeii, but Moffat points out that Karen Gillan, who played a soothsayer in the same episode, resurfaced as Amy Pond a year later. “I think the audience are perfectly well aware that the show is made up and the same actor might pop up in a different role,” he says.

Tabloids, meanwhile, seized on Capaldi’s most famous role, as sabre-toothed spin doctor Malcolm Tucker in The Thick Of It and In The Loop. “Who the F**k?” asked The Sun. Never mind that the Glaswegian has been acting since 1982, appearing in the likes of Local Hero, Dangerous Liaisons and World War Z, which was presciently credited as “W.H.O. Doctor” (as in World Health Organisation). Nor that he’s the first Oscar-winning Doctor, the director of 1994’s tidal winner Best Live Action Short Film, Franz Kafka’s A Wonderful Life. Malcolm calls a long shadow.

“Essentially the gap between me and the Doctor is smaller than the gap between me and Malcolm,” says Capaldi, who won’t even raise his voice, let alone wear flamboyant. “Malcolm took a lot more of me in some ways. It was a darker, more anxiety-ridden performance, which was always quite stressful. This is a joyful experience.”

Finally, there’s the age issue. Capaldi is 56, a year older than Matt Smith was when Doctor Who began and 30 years older than Smith, the youngest-ever Doctor, was in his first episode. Steven Smith’s Doctor famously empowered the show to crack America, proving massively popular with a long-suffered (and huge!) Stateside audience. It seems a risky move to suddenly hark back to the锉tery Time Lord of 50 years ago. One of the world’s most famous Whovians. >
certainly thinks so. "To suddenly go older well, and he has made a very wise choice, Doctor Who. But I know Steven Moffat took hold in America was the sex appeal. It would have been riskier to keep playing the of looking back as evolving. It would certainly be a brave choice," Hobbit director Peter have been riskier to keep playing the young man with interesting hair. It would have been like exposing the formula. The main thing you need is someone who can absolutely own a show of that size but it's nice that he's so different from Matt." Shooting the climax of the regeneration episode was a peculiar day for everybody. Coleman calls the experience of switching stars within a single scene "brutal and unique." "They kept us separate because I didn't want to be seeing what Matt was doing and thinking. How do you follow that?" remarks Capaldi. "And Matt didn't want to see his successor standing in the wings dressed the same as him. Then Matt gave me a big hug and gave me his watch that he wore as Doctor Who and left and I just had to get on with it. Everyone was conscious of this strange moment."

"Capaldi's Doctor is a considerably more forbidding figure than Smith's boyish nutty professor. "He's travelled alone for 1,000 years and outlives everyone and gets a huge reminder that he's not one of them," says Moffat. "So he takes a step back, or at least imagines he does. He holds himself at a more Time Lordly distance."

"He's mysterious," says Capaldi. "He's more alien than he's been for a while. He doesn't quite understand human beings or really care very much about their approval." He always wanted his Doctor to wear dark clothes, so as not to remotely resemble the usual Time Lords in the provincial pantomimes of his youth. After agreeably trying on "all sorts of silly, ridiculous costumes", he got his way. "I can become a kind of Franchise where it's not a real character at all but just an amigment of elements that people think are Doctor Who: a scarf, a bow tie..."

"I'm not just playing a bloke who could almost be her boyfriend and now she's not." We get to see more of Clara's ordinary life on Earth. "It's like seeing a control freak out of control," says Coleman. "She's a boyfriend and she's a schoolteacher and then she travels around the universe with the Doctor. She's trying to live both of those lives separately and not let them collide."

Coleman and Capaldi met for lunch a few times before filming began but they wanted to preserve a certain distance. "We have much longer scenes now." Moffat says that the throughline for this series is more emotional than plot-driven, based on "the fact that Clara was running around with this dashing young bloke who could almost be her boyfriend and now she's not. "We get to see more of Clara's ordinary life on Earth. "It's like seeing a control freak out of control," says Coleman. "She's a boyfriend and she's a schoolteacher and then she travels around the universe with the Doctor. She's trying to live both of those lives separately and not let them collide."

"Double Vision"

CAPALDI ALREADY BEEN IN DOCTOR WHO — AS POMPEIAN BANKER CAECILIUS, BACK WHEN DAVID TENNANT DROVE THE TARDIS. BUT THERE IS A LONG TRADITION OF TV ACTORS DOUBLING UP...

LEO FERRIGNO IN THE INCREDIBLE HULK

The original green baron stared in the '70s '80s show, but in 1961 episode Ring Of The Beach he also appeared as himself in Batman, allowing his stuntman to play as Hulk. On Mark's muscles. You'd look great all pumped-up.

ROBIN WILLIAMS IN MORK & MINDY

This character of his who seems gay Mark wasn't a massive stretch for the (insanely) young Robin Williams. The other reason he played was meeting the show's creator, to play up for episode 14 of season three, titled Mark Mose Robin Williams. Can you guess who else he played?

JOHN HILLERMAN IN MAGNUM P. L

As stuffy Brit Jonathan Quaye Higgins, Hillerman spent most episodes being talked to by Tom Selleck's slick detective. But not the course of the show he also played Higgins' father and no fewer than three Higgins half-brothers, most memorably Peary, a former Irish priest.

SHERYL LEE IN TWIN PEAKS

She was the face of Twin Peaks from the very start, playing the girl whose murder kicked off the whole strange, surreal, smalltown mystery. Then she popped up later in the series as Laura's brunette cousin. Basically her doppelganger. Well, that and David Lynch...

GARRET DILLAHUNT IN DEADWOOD

Dalton, played by Garret Dillahunt in Deadwood. It's the role that made him a star on HBO. Western was the next, tidy, whole-mountain film of Wolcott. But he first appeared skulking under filthy prostitution as Jack McGee - the guy who shoots methyl hydrogen Hickey (Keith Carradine) in the first episode. DAN JOLIN
really know who he is either. He’s an adrenalin junkie and his curiosity takes him to new levels of danger. With Matt’s Doctor she felt quite safe, really. She knew she’d be caught if she was in danger, but this guy is a lot less human-friendly and a lot less patient. He’s more removed and enigmatic.

You can’t quite access him in the same way.”

What makes Doctor Who fun for directors, says Coleman, is that each episode can have “a completely different feel, look, genre and tone. Steven says to each director: own the episode.” Wheatley had previously expressed interest in directing Doctor Who (“My son is a fan and I wanted to make something that he could watch, as opposed to all the other stuff I’ve done”) and Moffat decided he was perfect for the hefty job of introducing a new Doctor. “It was like the worst possible idea. ‘If some cunt can prove. After the casting announcement, Capaldi is suddenly public property. “I don’t know what to do about it,” he says mildly. “You just have to suck it and see. My life has changed so completely in the space of a year and I anticipate it will change some more, not necessarily in ways you would welcome.”

Having been a fan for half a century, Capaldi knows that the Doctor is the celebrity, not him. He is just the latest incarnation of a modern-day legend. “For me it's like a Grimms' fairy tale because the Doctor takes the girl deep into the forest and shows her monsters but then returns her to safety. It’s a basic human desire to be able to leave when the going gets rough.” He seems quite taken by this idea. “If life is too terrible, wouldn’t it be great if you could just get into a police box and leave?”

dorian@empiremagazine.com

DOCTOR WHO: SERIES EIGHT BEGINS ON SATURDAY AUGUST 23, ON BBC ONE.

empireonline.com

“THIS GUY’S A LOT LESS HUMAN-FRIENDLY.” JENNA COLEMAN

invest more in its most lucrative export. “Doctor Who is consistently made for exactly the same amount of money — not enough,” he quips. “It will look bigger but there are elements of Baker and Troughton and Pertwee. He’s inherently funny but inherently brooding and complicated, as a performer and a man.”

“A hugely talented director with huge enthusiasm for the job. Why wouldn’t you?” says Moffat. “Cinematic ambition on a budget that’s anything but cinematic is what you need for Doctor Who.”

The subject of money tends to rear its head when you’re talking to Moffat. He’s clearly frustrated that the BBC won’t