

Time gentlemen

Steven Moffat looks ahead to his final story as *Doctor Who* showrunner – and Peter Capaldi's last as the Time Lord. But after eight years in the job, does he have any regrets?

INTERVIEW BY PATRICK MULKERN

OVER DINNER IN London's Mayfair, Steven Moffat is in an affable, unusually relaxed mood. Following eight years of "gut-churning panic", the showrunner of *Doctor Who* is unwinding. If you're strolling around Richmond Park and hear an unearthly wheezing, groaning sound, don't mistake it for the arrival of the famous police box – it'll actually be Moffat ("I'm the oldest, slowest, wobbliest cyclist") doing two laps of the park. Now 55, with his time on *Who* ending and his other global hit *Sherlock* on indefinite hold, he's on a fitness drive and enjoying his first proper family holidays in ages (Hawaii, San Diego, Nice, Edinburgh).

But before leaving *Who* behind, his final task is to big up his and Peter Capaldi's swansong, the Christmas special *Twice upon a Time*. The current Doctor will pal up with his very first incarnation from the 1960s (David Bradley takes on the role from William Hartnell, who died in 1975), and then all these old-timers will make way for a youthful – and first female – Doctor, Jodie Whittaker...

Jodie isn't actually the first female Doctor. In a 1999 Comic Relief spoof, you cast Joanna Lumley as the Time Lord.
I did, although if we'd replaced David Tennant with a woman it wouldn't have worked. It was too early. We could have replaced Matt Smith with a woman, given that his

Doctor was more sexless and less of a lad, but then I got obsessed with seeing Peter in the Tardis. No regrets about that! Then I turned [arch-villain] the Master into Missy and no one had any problem with that being the same character. But we have to worry about our *Daily Mail*-reading viewers saying, "That's not the same person!" This isn't a show exclusively for progressive liberals; this is also for people who voted Brexit. That's not me politically at all – but we have to keep everyone on board. But it was [incoming showrunner] Chris Chibnall, and only Chris, who made the really big decision, and all credit to him. It's going to work, I know it is. More and more of the audience were asking for it.

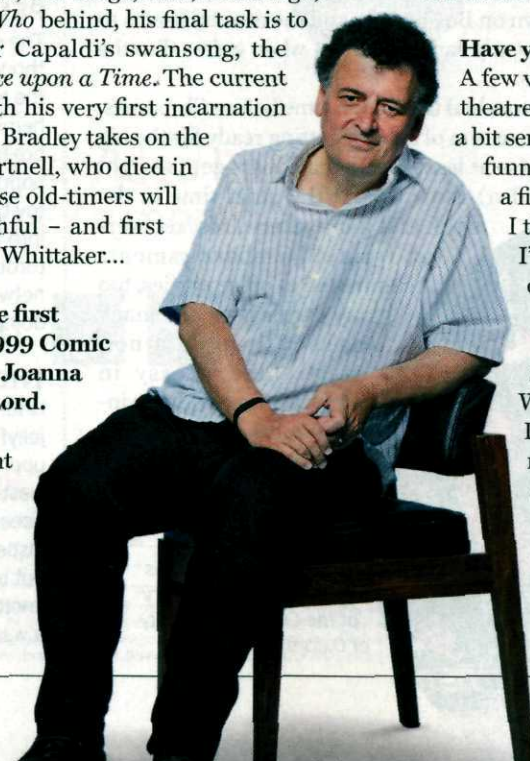
It is absolutely the right choice. Now is the time.

Have you met Jodie Whittaker?

A few weeks ago I bumped into her at the theatre. I wondered if she was going to be a bit serious because the Doctor has to be funny, but when you meet Jodie, she's a fireball of mischief and irreverence. I think she'll be brilliant as the Doctor. I've obviously seen her tiny bit at the end of the Christmas special.

Where does the Christmas special kick off?

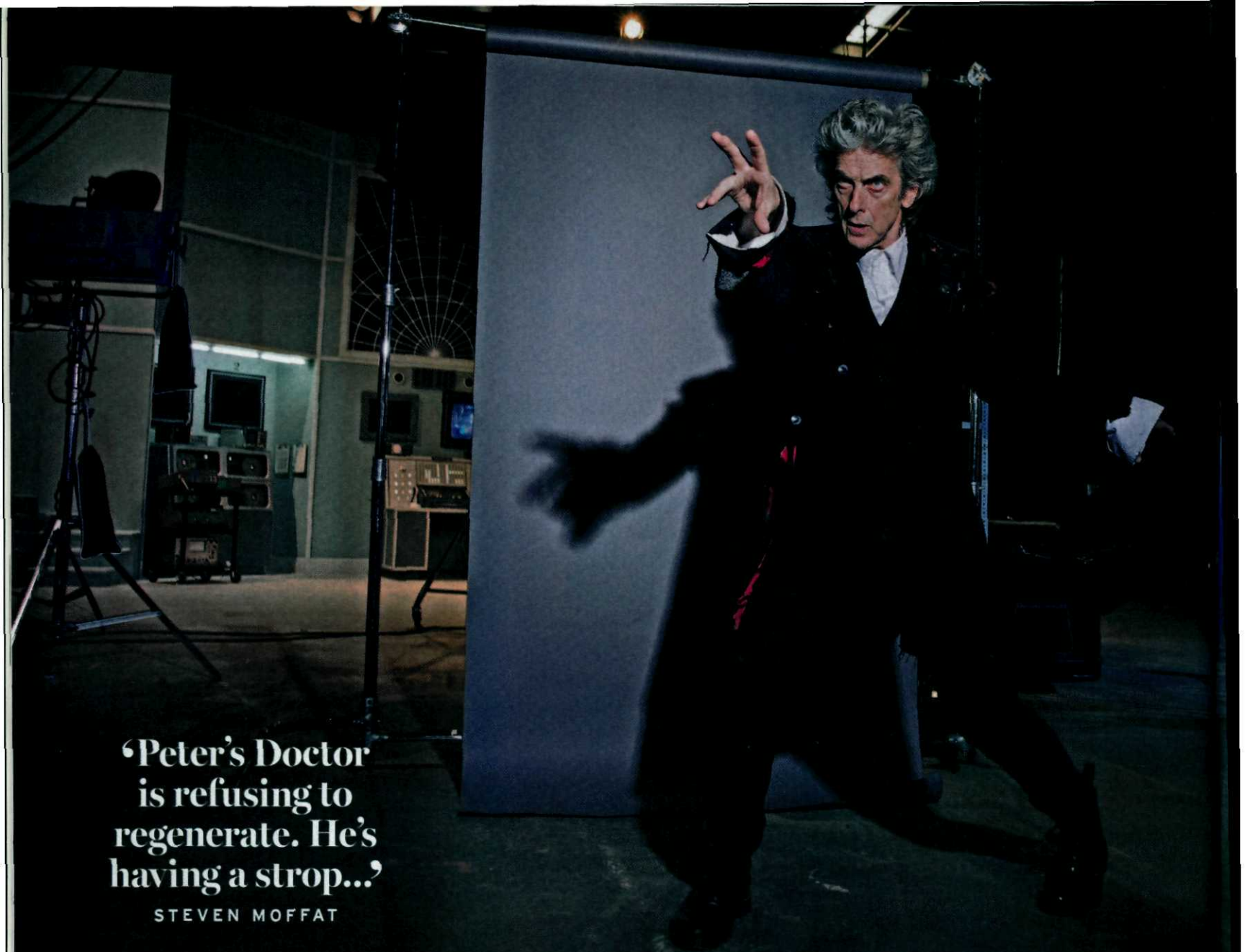
We ended the last series with Peter's Doctor about to regenerate and refusing. He's had enough of becoming other people. He's having a strop. In a wintry landscape he meets the first Doctor, who is also refusing to change. So it's the 12th Doctor persuading the first to regenerate, and realising he must as well. ▷



TWO HEADS...
"A happy Christmas to all of you at home". David Bradley as the first Doctor and Peter Capaldi as the 12th

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RICHARD
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'Peter's Doctor is refusing to regenerate. He's having a stop...'

STEVEN MOFFAT

◁ Surely it's not just about two old men dying?

No, we're not going to have an hour of two suicidal Doctors. That's not appropriate for Christmas Day or *Doctor Who*. There's a tradition of the Doctors being funny when they get together. When Doctors meet, it's a laugh. The original Doctor has a lot of fun at the expense of the modern one's sonic glasses and electric guitar. There's something amusing about the 12th Doctor realising that he came from this politically incorrect, funny old man. This is who he was. I've known for ages the next Doctor would be a woman so I was thinking, "Why does he subconsciously make that choice?" Maybe seeing the whole span of his life as a man might make him think it's time to be more progressive.

Pearl Mackie is back as Bill – are you surprised how popular she's been?

No, you know a star when you see one. She's great. People responded very strongly to her and they like the contrast between her and Peter.

Doctor Who has a knack of spotting talent, like Andrew Garfield back in 2007, who now has a Hollywood career.

Our casting director Andy Pryor is assiduous

on who's coming up. We'd never have seen Matt Smith but for him. We had Olivia Colman [in Smith's debut story in 2010] a heartbeat before she became a goddess. She was already regarded as a genuinely great actress, but within a year of that she was the darling of the nation.

It was the same with Carey Mulligan in *Blink* (the Weeping Angels' debut and RT readers' favourite episode).

Oh, my God, Carey Mulligan! It's funny but *Blink*, I say immodestly, is a very famous episode and yet Carey Mulligan, who was the star of it, I'm almost certain wouldn't even remember being in *Doctor Who*. I don't think she was much of a fan. They liked her so much, they said, "Do you want to be the next companion?" but she said no. She was amazing.

Have you stayed in touch with your leading men and women?

I'm very good friends with Peter and Matt. It's harder to see Matt because I've been insanely busy with *Doctor Who* and he's been jetting around being incredibly handsome and dating the most beautiful woman in the world

[Lily James]. I get Cardiff and he gets all of that. But every time we get together, it's brilliant. I saw him recently in LA and he's on great form. Such a cool guy.

Are you expecting the show to be radically different after you've gone?

I shouldn't speculate. But I think Chris is going to be bold. That's his nature. And he knows *Doctor Who* very well and he'd think the time has arrived to be bold.

Will you follow your predecessor Russell T Davies and refuse to write for the show again?

I'll draw a line under it. I've written more than anybody else, not even by a small margin now. So that seems enough.

Are you're optimistic for the future of *Doctor Who*?

Absolutely 100 per cent optimistic. I don't think we're anywhere close to halfway through the new series run. There's a huge amount of excitement in Jodie as the new Doctor. It's going to pep things up. It's going to be around for ever. And it's about to enter a golden period.



THEATRE OF DREAMS
Peter Capaldi on a set created to resemble one from a 1966 *Doctor Who* story, *The Tenth Planet*

Does that mean you'll have time to write more *Sherlocks*?

Everyone is busy. I vaguely assume we will do it again at some point. I don't think it will be very soon. It's due a longer gap. It is still enormously successful so there will always be a demand for it, I hope. And there is no upper limit on how long we can do it. Holmes and Watson can be 60 or 70.

So what are you working on now?

Possibly futilely, but as an exercise, I'm writing a play. It's not been commissioned by anyone so may never see the light of day. I just wanted to prove to myself that I'm still a writer, by which I mean the job of a writer is to make things up and write them down. Without a deadline, without money. Very vaguely it's about how people bully each other. There are no monsters, murders, mysteries, there's no timey-wimey, no huge plot twists, none of the tricks I've been relying on. Its place in my life may only be as a brain cleanser after many years of *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*.

What do you do when you're stuck for inspiration?

I go for walks, I cycle. I read something really good that makes me excited. And I don't ever do this but Mark [Gatiss] does – he has baths if he's stuck. With a cup of tea. It's worth recording that the man has been known to have more than one bath in a day.

There's talk of you revamping *Dracula* with Mark. How is that progressing?

We're going to have a meeting as soon as he's free and we'll start writing January-ish. We've got an idea of how we're going to handle *Dracula* but we're not saying what it is.

So you won't say if you're bringing the character up-to-date like *Sherlock*?

Correct, I won't.

Are you worried about following up *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*?

I've never met a writer who isn't in a constant state of worry. I have a problem keeping my ravenous pit of insecurity in check. My fear, my paranoia, my panic. They say you're only as good as your last project, but that's far too optimistic. You're only as good as your next project, is more correct.

Beyond what you and Russell have achieved?

Hopefully, what we did was relatively golden, but onwards! Chris is an extraordinary talent to get to be the third showrunner on a show that's been going for 12 years. Normally someone like Chris wouldn't dream of being the third showrunner of an aged series. That wouldn't happen on any show except *Doctor Who*.

Any regrets from your time running the show?

I haven't put a show out that I considered a disaster. But I haven't put one out that I didn't think was going to be. Every single one was reeling towards the precipice at some point. Throughout my *Doctor Who* time I felt I had my nose pressed against the next disaster.

Is it a wrench or a relief to say goodbye?

It's more of a relief because my last year in the job was colossal. I did three *Sherlocks* and 14 *Doctor Whos* in about a year and that's a grotesque amount of work. So I'm still marvelling at the idea of having weekends off, not getting up at four in the morning to start typing. There's only so long you can live like that.

THE ONE AND ONLY

David Bradley on reprising the first Doctor

I don't think it's too scary for a three-year-old, is it?" David Bradley asks, worried that having watched his appearance in the Christmas special, his granddaughter might spend the rest of the day hiding behind the sofa. He pauses, concerned. "It's the Cybermen... I mean, they freak me out!"

Bradley's own *Doctor Who* journey began at a more mature age, when as a 21-year-old he watched William Hartnell emerge from the Tardis for the first time back in 1963.

"You'd have your tea, watch *Doctor Who* and then go out on the town when you were in your early 20s," the now 75-year-old actor recalls. "I'd never have dreamt of being in it because at the time I was an engineer."

After leaving engineering for drama school, Bradley won an Olivier Award as the Fool in *King Lear* in 1991, then became best known as malicious school caretaker Argus Filch in the *Harry Potter* films and evil Lord Walder Frey in *Game of Thrones*. Those villainous roles led to his first *Doctor Who* appearance in 2012 as a vicious space trader called Solomon who clashed with Matt Smith's Doctor.

Later that year, while watching the Queen's Diamond Jubilee flotilla, Bradley was tapped on the shoulder by Mark Gatiss, who was working on a drama about *Doctor Who* for the series' 50th anniversary and needed an actor to play the late William Hartnell himself.

That story became 2013's *An Adventure in Space and Time*, with Bradley's performance attracting praise – so when Steven Moffat decided the perfect goodbye to Peter Capaldi's incumbent Doctor would be to bring back the very first version of the Time Lord, Bradley got the call. "It's part impersonation, part capturing some of those mannerisms – but not just a direct mimicry," says Bradley of playing Hartnell's Doctor, rather than the man himself. "I wanted to make it my own, while honouring his performance."

Of course, fans will be most excited for the last moments of this year's Christmas special, when Capaldi's Doctor regenerates into Jodie Whittaker's – and Bradley, who worked with Whittaker on ITV's *Broadchurch* in 2013 (alongside creator Chris Chibnall, who cast them both) is as excited as anybody.

"When I heard it was Jodie I thought, 'Well, that's perfect' – because she's got the range and she's funny," Bradley says. "They just need to keep that sense of fun and not forget the comic energy."

HUW FULLERTON



HOLD THE FRONT PAGE
David Bradley with the first RT to feature *Doctor Who* on the cover