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Doctor Who

COVER STORY

Tom Baker is Doctor Who.



There's always been an audience for science fiction, from the days of "Flash Gordon" to "Star Wars." The NEW JERSEY NETWORK goes galaxy hopping with the famed BBC space fantasy series, DOCTOR WHO, Saturdays at 9:00 p.m., beginning December 3.

The adventure series on NEW JERSEY NETWORK will feature Tom Baker as Doctor Who, a Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey, who travels through time and space fighting the forces of evil in order to save the universe. Originally designed as a Saturday afternoon serial, each chapter ending in a cliff-hanger, DOCTOR WHO will be presented on the Network in full-length form over 41 weeks. The total running times will vary from 45 minutes up to 2½ hours.

Doctor Who faces enemies as treacherous as Flash Gordon's foe, the Emperor Ming, or Luke Skywalker's rival, Darth Vader. Traveling from the planet Vogra to the planet Morestra, with stops on Earth and all points between, the Doctor is constantly sought out to protect the human race from imminent destruction.

Defender of the Universe

In the opening story, "Robot," Doctor Who fights a group of villainous scientists who seek to dominate the world through computer control of all existing atomic weapons. A robot, re-programmed for evil activities, is to carry out this plan. After several failed attempts to thwart the robot, the Doctor is able to concoct a metal-destroying virus which disintegrates it.

The following Saturday, Doctor Who faces the Wirrn, huge wasp-like creatures, in "The Ark of Space." Earth has been devastated by solar flares. As a survival technique, the remaining inhabitants of the planet have been placed in an automated space station and frozen through the process of cryogenics.

These people, still frozen in the space station after 1000 years, are under siege from the Wirrn creatures. Doctor Who journeys to the space station with his assistants Sarah and Harry and defeats the Wirrn, thus allowing the remaining Earth population to start life once more.

The third movie in the series, "The Sontaran Experiment," finds the Doctor up against the Sontarans, whom he discovers are planning to take over the entire universe. The scheme involves a battery of brutal experiments on the human species. The Doctor goes one on one with Field Major Styre, the leader of the Sontarans. Styre captures Sarah and plans to use her in the experiments. Doctor Who foils Styre's plan by playing on the barbarian's vanity, and once again the universe is preserved.

The Birth of Doctor Who

When did all this interplanetary adventure start? The date is November 23, 1963, when the BBC first presented the series to its English audience. Created by Sidney Newman and Donald Wilson, the DOCTOR WHO series was designed to appeal to adults as well as children. The main characters were two

school teachers, a teenaged girl, and a crotchety old man, the Doctor.

Doctor Who has two hearts and a body temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The space ship he travels in is called a TARDIS, its name taken from the letters for Time and Relative Dimensions in Space. The most amazing aspect of the Doctor is that, like all Time Lords, he is able to regenerate his cells whenever he is on the brink of death, which results in a total replacement of body and mind. In other words, he changes physically and psychologically.

Strangely enough, this usually happens when the actor portraying the Doctor wishes to leave the series. There have been numerous changes in the cast over the twenty years DOCTOR WHO has been running. Traveling companions come and go, and to date there have been five Doctors. Tom Baker is number four and viewers witness his arrival in episode one on NJN. The character of the Doctor has evolved also. He is no longer the old man of the first series, but a younger, modishly-dressed version.

Last month, the NEW JERSEY NETWORK aired a special twentieth anniversary party celebrating the show's long-running history. Titled THE FIVE DOCTORS, the program reunited most of the actors and actresses in the cast over the years in an adventure of the Death Zone on Gallifrey. Sound impossible to bring together an assortment of people from over a twenty-year period? It's really no problem when you're a Time Lord!

BY MARK DONNELLY