



## THE DR. WHO COLLECTION

1965/1966/1995, Anchor Bay Entertainment #DV11958, DD-1.0/MA/LB/CC/+, \$39.99, 223m 1s, DVD-1

## DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS

1965, Anchor Bay Entertainment #DV11577, DD-1.0/MA/LB/16:9/CC/+, \$19.99, 82m 30s, DVD-1

## DALEKS—INVASION EARTH 2150 A.D.

1966, Anchor Bay Entertainment #DV11578, DD-1.0/MA/LB/16:9/CC/+, \$19.99, 83m 47s, DVD-1

## DALEKMANIA

1995, Anchor Bay Entertainment #DV12100, DD-1.0/CC, NSR, 56m 44s, DVD-1

The popular, long-running BBC television series DOCTOR WHO scarcely requires a lengthy introduction to VW readers—indeed, very few of the show's essentials need be recounted in

order to define the place of the two Amicus feature film adaptations of the show released in the mid-1960s. In 1965, viewers of the show had no idea that the protagonist (first portrayed by William Hartnell) was a fugitive Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey, or that he was capable of regenerating his own worn-out body (thus allowing him to be played by a succession of different actors over the years). What was known then was that the Doctor (the title of the show posed a question, as opposed to providing a surname) was an otherworldly explorer who travelled through space and time with his granddaughter Susan in a craft known by the acronym TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimensions In Space). The TARDIS had the external appearance of a London police call-box (obsolete today, but a common sight when the show first aired) but boasted a seemingly limitless amount of space inside—and could transport its passengers

anywhere and *anywhen* they desired—in theory. The curiosity (and clumsiness) of Susan's Earthling schoolteachers Ian and Barbara, coupled with the erratic performance of the TARDIS, kicked the series off by propelling the foursome on an unscheduled journey—subsequent episodes recounted their adventures (which alternated between the fantastic and the historical) as the Doctor and Susan struggled to return Ian and Barbara to their own time and place.

No small amount of the show's mass acceptance can be credited to the arch-enemies first encountered by the Doctor on his second televised exploit. "The Daleks"—created by Terry Nation in a serial by that name—were the final stage of evolution of a warlike, formerly humanoid, alien race discovered by the Doctor and his companions on the planet Skaro. Though living, organic beings at their core, the Daleks were usually only seen in the form of their armored travel



machines: domed, gliding "pepperpot" constructions boasting eyestalks, grasping sucker appendages and lethal ray-guns. The appearance of the Daleks, coupled with the harsh, electronic monotone of their voices (their favorite word being "EX-TER-MI-NATE!") created nothing less than a public sensation. By 1965, two highly-rated Dalek serials had aired on DOCTOR WHO—the second being "The Dalek Invasion of Earth," also scripted by Nation—and plans to adapt the series into feature-film format simply had to include the villainous show-stoppers.

**DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS**, while at heart a faithful condensation of Nation's first serial, was adapted as a "stand-alone" feature by altering many specifics of the show, while the already considerable appeal of the project to fans of British fantasy and science-fiction was enhanced by the casting of genre favorite Peter Cushing. Though a financial deal resulted in the new film being credited as "An AARU Production," the Cushing DR. WHO films (note the subtle spelling difference) are generally known and accepted as the works of Amicus Productions; both were produced by Milton Subotsky and Max J. Rosenberg (who also co-wrote the first feature) and directed by Gordon Flemying.

In the films, Cushing plays an Earthling inventor actually named "Dr. Who." His pride and joy, the TARDIS, sits in his own backyard (still, oddly, disguised as a police call-box), as it awaits its trial run. As **DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS** opens, we meet Dr. Who's granddaughter Susan (Roberta Tovey), who is considerably younger than the teenaged Susan of the series. Ian (Roy Castle) and Barbara (**WOMEN IN LOVE**'s Jennie Linden) are no longer Susan's teachers—here,



*Peter Cushing as a non-canonical Dr. Who, saving Roy Castle and granddaughter Rebecca Tovey from danger on the planet Skaros in DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS.*

Barbara is Susan's older sister, while Ian is Barbara's new boyfriend, paying his first call to her home. Dr. Who, instead of trying to fend off unwanted attention, is delighted to show Ian his new invention (Susan and Barbara, naturally, accompany the men)—but one clumsy misstep sends the TARDIS into unscheduled flight. The four protagonists arrive on a scorched, seemingly dead alien planet—but the sight of a futuristic city in the distance sparks Dr. Who's curiosity. Rather than try to return home straight away, he fabricates a story in which a damaged "fluid link" in the TARDIS necessitates a quest to the city in search of vital mercury. Little does the reckless doctor know that the condition of the planet (Skaro) is the result of a nuclear war between two offshoots of the same race: the blond, peaceful Thals (led by Barrie Ingham as Alydon and Yvonne Antrobus as Dyoni) and the emotionless, amoral Daleks. The longer the four humans remain on Skaro, the more

deadly radiation they absorb—and while the Thals have a remedy for this, it's Dalek City that the travellers are headed for. The Daleks soon capture the explorers; but rather than exterminate them outright, they allow Susan to visit the Thals in an effort to obtain some of the anti-radiation drug. Using the captives as their emissaries, the Daleks plan to trick the Thals into meeting with them to negotiate a long-delayed peace—naturally, their real goal is to wipe the Thals off the face of the planet once and for all and take total control of Skaro (as it stands now, they are unable to leave the confines of their metal-floored city in their travel machines). It doesn't take Dr. Who long to see the Daleks for what they are, but two challenges await the adventurers: first, they must escape the Dalek city; and then they must teach the Thals to fight...

Cushing's Dr. was as different from Hartnell's Doctor in personality as he was in name. While Hartnell's character was

best known for his irascible, crotchety temper, Cushing played Dr. Who as a kindly, if somewhat dotty, bespectacled grandfather figure (no doubt providing a reassuring presence for children who found the Daleks quite frightening enough on the home screen). Additional identification for younger audience members was found in Tovey's Susan, while Linden and Castle filled the roles of their serial counterparts in a similar, accessible fashion (though with a greater emphasis on comic relief in the latter's case). It would be several years (and two more Doctors) before television's DOCTOR WHO made the jump to color; hence, **DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS** availed itself of every advantage the big screen had to offer. And just as important to the film's effect as the 2.35:1 scope photography was its constantly vivid color. The previously monochromatic Daleks now dazzled the eye with armor plating in cherry red, electric blue and regal gold (also

suggesting a hierarchy among the race). Their city and their weaponry are depicted in similarly rich fashion (though the Daleks seem to have no appreciation for aesthetics themselves, let alone a legitimate use for *lava lamps*—nevertheless, there they are!)—and even the devastated landscape of Skaro contains a bright, shiny surprise or two.

The all-important look of the film has been lost on Stateside viewers since the days of its theatrical release, as the overly dark, horrendously cropped Thorn/EMI videocassette release in no way represented **DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS** as intended (though the cast managed to keep the film reasonably entertaining even in this rendition). But Anchor Bay has come through again with a visual restoration that is, quite simply, eye-popping. The wide-screen image is enhanced for 16:9 playback, and while no tweaking of the original soundtrack was deemed necessary, the Dolby Digital mono is more than

adequate. Linden and Tovey are heard on an alternate commentary track, where they are interviewed by Jonathan Sothcott, author of **THE CULT FILMS OF PETER CUSHING**. Their enjoyable reminiscences are highlighted by stories of what it was like to work with the ever-industrious Castle (the thieving jazz musician of Amicus' **DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS**); and especially Cushing, who was reportedly as conscientious about not intimidating his castmates as he was about reassuring his young viewers.

The film's theatrical trailer (also letterboxed) is provided, while a poster/still gallery, a "History of Doctor Who" essay (which covers the television series in detail) and a Peter Cushing biography appear on both this disc and that of the sequel. Twenty-four chapters have been assigned to the film, though a typo raises the number to twenty-five on the insert, which also contains poster art and some informative liner notes by Scooter McRae.

*Peter Cushing is catapulted into a London of the far future in the somewhat darker sequel, DALEKS—INVASION EARTH 2150 A.D.*





Harsh critical reviews didn't prevent **DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS** from becoming a box-office bonanza in 1965, and Terry Nation's "The Dalek Invasion of Earth" was quickly adapted into a screenplay by Subotsky and DOCTOR WHO writer David Whitaker. The resulting feature of the following year, while routinely advertised as **DALEKS—INVASION EARTH 2150 A.D.**, is actually announced onscreen with different punctuation, reading **DALEKS' INVASION EARTH 2150 A.D.** The TV story was another adventure of the Doctor, Susan, Ian and Barbara, but by the time this film was made, Ian and Barbara's characters had exited the series (in "The Chase," yet another Dalek story which made use of the new and improved feature-film Daleks, albeit in B&W). Susan herself had left the show at the end of "The Dalek Invasion of Earth," but the romantic affair that brought this about didn't seem quite appropriate for Roberta Tovey's version of the character and was left out of this adaptation. Replacing Ian and Barbara were Jill Curzon as Louise (Dr. Who's niece) and comedian Bernard Cribbins as Tom Campbell, a constable who inadvertently joins the TARDIS crew when he makes for a convenient callbox after his unsuccessful attempt to thwart a jewel robbery. This time, the TARDIS stays where it is in space, but makes a temporal jump to another war-devastated location: the London of 2150. A collapse of rubble prevents the travellers from returning to the craft and forces them to seek aid in the ruined city, which houses three types of inhabitants: the Daleks (who make an impressive entrance in a flying saucer); their zombified, formerly human

slaves (now clad in black leather and mind-control radio helmets), known as Robomen; and resistance fighters, including Hammer favorite Andrew Keir as Wyler and Ray Brooks as David. Dr. Who and Tom are abducted by the Daleks and threatened with Robotization, while Susan and Louise find temporary safety with the resistance. Now, not only do the crewmembers need to reassemble and regain the TARDIS, but they must find a way to stop the outrageously ambitious plan of the Daleks to hollow out the Earth itself and use it as a gigantic spacecraft!

The story, again, is an essentially faithful condensation of Nation's original, with adjustments made for the feature format and the new versions of the central characters. Susan's former romance with David, as mentioned, was dropped, favoring Wyler's presence as an adult protector in Dr. Who's absence (this comes in handily as health issues limited Cushing's participation—it's notable that the name "Dr. Who" features in neither the title nor the advertising of this film). The comic talents of Cribbins are indulged in a setpiece in which Tom, impersonating a Roboman, struggles to keep step with their close-order mealtime drill in a definite highlight. And, as was the case in the previous film, the death-dealing weapon of the Daleks manifests itself in puffs of innocuous-appearing fire-extinguisher fumes. Still, for all the steps taken for the sake of young viewers, **DALEKS' INVASION** is (unavoidably) a far more violent and sinister outing than its predecessor, and the public response was far less enthusiastic. While the critical reaction was noticeably improved this time around, the

bigger budget invested in this production (partially through the participation of the breakfast cereal Sugar Puffs, the unlikely product placement of which can be seen throughout the feature) was not recouped at the box office, and plans for a third Dalek feature were dropped.

This is not to say that the film will neither interest nor entertain fans. On the contrary—what hurt the film in 1966 will most likely make a better impression on today's viewers than that left by the friendlier original, and Anchor Bay's disc release can do nothing but lend repair to **DALEKS' INVASION**'s reputation. While the DVD's clarity and still-frame functions expose such previously invisible flaws as the wires supporting the Dalek saucer and the cost-cutting re-use of an explosion effect, the previous, disastrous Thorn/EMI VHS release is now permanently retireable. The film is here given its due in another stellar widescreen (16:9 enhanced) transfer, with rich colors and another well-rendered Dolby Digital mono soundtrack. An alternate French-language dub (in the absence of a commentary track) and the theatrical trailer are the only exclusive supplements on this disc, which provides 25 chapters for the feature and an insert which again offers poster art and a (different) set of notes from Scooter McRae.

Anchor Bay sells the two Dalek features separately and as part of THE DR. WHO COLLECTION, a box set which includes a third, exclusive disc of the 1995 documentary **DALEKMANIA**. This welcome addition, directed by Kevin Davies, provides all the additional supplemental material one could possibly want (short of the counterpart TV episodes) in a package that runs just



Three young women are besieged in a cabin by devil worshippers in Sal Ciavarella's HPE: **HARDCORE POISONED EYES**.

under an hour. A framing device features two children being dropped off at a cinema to see one of the Dalek movies (the ticket-taker is Michael Wisher, who played Dalek creator Davros at a much later point in the TV series), while the story behind the making of the two films and the simultaneous deluge of Dalek merchandise (much of which now commands princely sums, as the program notes in detail) is related by many of the surviving participants (including the now-deceased Terry Nation). Roberta Tovey, Barrie Ingham, Yvonne Antrobus and Jill Curzon recount their respective experiences, occasionally showing off the souvenirs they managed to keep over the years; and many viewers will appreciate the on-screen interview with veteran stuntman Eddie Powell (whom they saw without actually seeing in films ranging from Hammer's **THE MUMMY** to Ridley Scott's **ALIEN**), who highlights the on-camera injury he

sustained during **INVASION**, in which he falls from a rooftop before being blasted to death by the Daleks. **DALEKMANIA**, produced to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the first Dalek film, is so loaded with trivia that it rates 19 DVD chapters in its own right. The full-screen image (which includes letterboxed clips from the movies and their trailers) and the mono sound are both fine. And when one considers that it would cost about the same to buy the two films separately, why would anyone not opt for the box set?

The DR. WHO features are not "canonical" entries in the DOCTOR WHO series, and any fan debate on the subject remains, in the end, pointless. The Cushing/Dalek vehicles remain good, historically-significant entertainment for genre enthusiasts of all ages, and these Anchor Bay renditions come highly recommended. —Shane M. Dallmann

## HPE: **HARDCORE POISONED EYES**

2000, Profound Images, DD-2.0/LB/+, \$19.99, 87m 27s, DVD-0

The worth of any siege melodrama, natural or supernatural, is measured in part in how it contrives to keep its hostages locked in for the evening. In **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** (1968), the breathing are outnumbered by an army of reanimated corpses; in **THE AMITYVILLE HORROR** (1979) and **POLTERGEIST** (1982), the formula is reversed, localizing the source of dread within formerly cozy households whose inhabitants are understandably reluctant to part with their investments; in **THE EVIL DEAD** (1982), Sam Raimi makes the hoary bridge-is-out trick work through sheer momentum. Lesson learned: there are ways, and there are ways.

In Sal Ciavarella's shot-on-video **HARDCORE POISONED EYES** (2000), three young