

## Peter Capaldi talks fame, fans and why there's no flirting in his Tardis...

**I**S PETER CAPALDI a good Doctor Who? The critics have been asking that question almost since he got the part in 2013. The answer, of course, is simple. If you don't want a proper tears-in-the-eyes *It's a Wonderful Life* moment, stop reading now.

Back in May, while he was filming in Cardiff, a woman approached with her five-year-old daughter who was dressed up as a Dalek. The girl, her mother explained, was autistic and finding it difficult to accept a new Doctor. Capaldi knelt down and scrolled through pictures on his phone – showing her a snap of himself standing with Matt Smith and Jenna Coleman. “They think it's OK for me to be the Doctor,” he said softly, “So I hope you think it would be OK for me to be the Doctor too...”

In November, a video message from Capaldi to a nine-year-old called Thomas, also autistic, went viral. His words comforted the boy who was grieving for his dead grandmother. I raise these events with Capaldi as he draws cartoon Daleks above his autographs for my daughters and he waves the question away, blushing.

“No, no, I don't think that that's particular to

## ‘You're effectively joining a boy band or the Beatles’

PETER CAPALDI



me. Everyone who's played the part has been like that – it's just that I've coincided with an age of technology where these things get posted. *Doctor Who* has a special place in people's affection. You'd have to be very hard-hearted to reject that. It takes so little to make people happy.”

A true fan, Capaldi grew up in a rundown part of Glasgow watching third Doctor Jon Pertwee in the 70s. He wrote in to the show and received a bundle of scripts in return, which alerted him to the idea of acting. One of his favourite Christmas memories is getting the *Doctor Who Annual* – so he now feels very lucky indeed. “It's just been fantastic,” he says of his first series, beaming like he's just been given the part. “You wake every day and you're Doctor Who. By 7am you're fighting Daleks or running down a corridor. All kinds of moments are wonderful – the first time you operate the Tardis, the first time a wall shakes or the first time you see some slightly unconvincing rubber monster.” ▷

**SANTA'S HELPERS**  
Jenna Coleman and Peter Capaldi are joined by guest star Nick Frost in *Last Christmas*



# ‘I wake up and I’m



★ FAMILY DRAMA ★

‘If you put me in a real  
Tardis, I dread to think  
what would happen  
to the universe’

PETER CAPALDI

PHOTOGRAPHED  
EXCLUSIVELY FOR  
RADIO TIMES BY  
IAN DERRY

# *Doctor Who*





**LOVED ALL OVER**  
Peter Capaldi signs  
autographs in Cardiff,  
kicking off the *Doctor Who*  
World Tour in August

◁ He pauses, recalling tough times in the early Noughties when he was so broke he almost had to sell his house. "Also as an actor who's had good years and bad years, to find yourself working all year is a delight..." Although he's danced around the big time since his first job (he was working as a graphic designer when Bill Forsyth cast him in the 1983 hit movie, *Local Hero*), he was entirely unprepared for the attention the Doctor brings.

"No one was particularly bothered about what I said before. What's now shocking is I can't say anything publicly without it having a life. Not because I have extraordinary views but because people are keen on conflict, so they'll make that the story. They love to make out that [showrunner] Steven Moffat and I have disagreements. But that's business as usual. It made me realise how awful it must be to be a politician. I'm a lot more sympathetic to Malcolm Tucker's views now."

**T**HERE ARE BENEFITS that only fame can bring. In the summer, he flew across the globe with Coleman and Moffat in a *Doctor Who* world tour. "That was extraordinary. People tell you the show's successful abroad but until you actually see it, you don't realise. You're effectively joining a boy band or the Beatles. You arrive at the airport and there are packs of people screaming and holding up pictures of you. We'd do press events all day and then in the evening a public screening and Q&A, and people went bananas."

He was particularly surprised by the reaction in South America – crowds swamped him across

the continent from Mexico City to Rio, where *Doctor Who* is known as *Doctor Mysterio*. "In South Korea the venue seated 1,500 people, and 50,000 people applied for tickets." He rapidly becomes self-effacing and gives a quick laugh. "I was benefitting from Chris Eccleston, David Tennant and Matt Smith making the show so beloved – I swept in on their coat-tails and got all the adoration and BA first-class treatment."

It was during this tour that the first Moffat conflict stories appeared – Capaldi is supposed

## 'It's inappropriate for someone my age to be flirtatious'

PETER CAPALDI

to have refused to flirt with Coleman's Clara, thinking it undignified. "I always felt it would be inappropriate for someone my age to be in any kind of flirtatious relationship with a young person. But I think everybody felt that. The Doctor has to be a mysterious figure. It's hard when a show's been around for 50 years and every episode, apart from the lost ones, is available on DVD and there are people who know the minutiae of every detail of it. How can he be mysterious, how can he be strange? But he is strange, he's an alien. Your responses to events aren't necessarily human."

He still has an air of that strangeness as he says this – we're sitting at a boardroom table and he's side on to me, which helps with the autographs but means he's often addressing the air in front. He's wearing a slim dark suit and his eyebrows move around his forehead freely as we talk, underlining the sense you really are talking to the Doctor.

He laughs when I say this. "If you're ever under that illusion, just give me a piece of technology, any technology," he nods grimly. "My family know not to get me any tech for Christmas. I can never get it to work and it all becomes very tearful and pressurised. If you put me in a real Tardis, I dread to think what would happen to the universe."

STEPHEN ARMSTRONG

## Clara eyes the future

**S**peculation over Jenna Coleman leaving *Doctor Who* has become so frenzied that it's dwarfed even movie star Nick Frost showing up to play Santa Claus in the Christmas episode. Fans are desperate to know – and the stakes are high. If Jenna stays for another series, she'll become the longest-serving companion in the modern era, overtaking Karen Gillan.

Coleman, of course, is way too experienced to end the speculation – when we meet, almost the first thing RT asks is if she's coming back next season and she smiles very sweetly and says, regretfully, that she just can't reveal that. "It's still something that Steven [Moffat] and the team don't want to talk about – they want people to watch the Christmas episode and not know what's going to happen."

Having said that, she doesn't look or sound like an actor preparing to leave the show that made her a star. Over the course of two RT interviews recently Coleman hasn't pined remorsefully for Clara or given answers about her role in the past tense.

Christmas, though, remains special. In 2012, she effectively launched Clara Oswald on the world with her mysterious appearance as the Victorian governess in *The Snowmen* – still her favourite episode ever: "It was a bit Mary Poppins, a bit Nancy from *Oliver!* all mixed into one. I love the magical elements of the show – I'm such a girl. Peter comes in to watch things being blown up and I like the magical staircase to the cloud." Last year she played Lydia in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, as well as welcoming Peter Capaldi to the Tardis...

"I find it quite weird, being on TV at

Christmas – I'm always with my family and so everyone sits round to watch you..." She gives a little shudder. "Last year it was four nights. I was like, 'I'm so sorry, you don't have to watch.' But they want to, bless them." **SA**



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